

## Service Line Inventory FAQs

### **Why did I get a letter in the mail about my service line material?**

According to federal regulations, the City of Bethlehem was required to notify customers of their service line type by November 15, 2024, and annually thereafter. The US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) regulations also require public water suppliers to create an inventory of the material of every service line in their system and share that information with their customers.

Bethlehem's service line inventory is available to the public on our website at <https://www.bethlehem-pa.gov/Water-Sewer-Resources/Public-Information/Lead-Service-Lines>.

### **I'm just a tenant. Why am I getting this letter?**

We notified you because you live in the home and consume the water. Please share the information in the letter with anyone who drinks and/or cooks using water at this property. If you have concerns about your service line or plumbing, contact your landlord.

### **Is my water safe?**

Yes. The City of Bethlehem is committed to serving high quality, safe drinking water to our customers. Our water system meets all federal and state regulations for safe drinking water.

### **Where does the lead come from?**

Lead comes from plumbing fixtures and pipes, not the water itself. Source water is rarely a cause for elevated lead levels in drinking water. Lead is leached into the water from lead-containing pipes and plumbing fixtures through a process called corrosion. Corrosion is the dissolving or wearing away of metal caused by a chemical reaction between the metal and the water. The City of Bethlehem water system treats the water with orthophosphate at a concentration of 0.40-0.60 mg/L to reduce corrosion.

If your home was built after the mid-1940s, the service line is unlikely lead. If your home was built after 1991, there is no chance your service line is lead because that is when Pennsylvania banned the use of lead in water piping.

### **Does our water system test for lead?**

Yes. Our water system has tested for lead for decades and has never exceeded action-levels for lead. The current action level for lead is 15 parts per billion and 90% or more of the samples must not exceed this limit. For reference, one part per billion is equal to one drop of water in a 10,000-gallon swimming pool.

### **Can you identify my service line material? (Unknown service lines only)**

Yes. We can make an appointment to inspect where your service line comes into your home and attempt to identify what it's made of. It is not possible in every instance to identify service line materials in this way and even if we can identify your service line material, further investigation might be necessary.

### **Is the City of Bethlehem doing anything to reduce lead exposure?**

We add orthophosphate to the water at the treatment plant to control corrosion.

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The City has been proactively replacing lead service pipes with non-lead piping materials for many years. From 2011 to 2024, 516 lead services have been replaced, and 103 of these were found during normal maintenance activities, investigation and repair of leaks, and as part of water main replacement projects. The City was successfully awarded a \$2,875,000 PennVest grant in 2021 that funded the replacement of 413 lead service lines and galvanized services requiring replacement. This project was completed in 2024. All lead service lines replaced under this project were located inside the City limits.

The City will be ramping up replacement efforts. The first step is identifying all service line material in the water distribution piping system. Once all service line material is known, a service line replacement plan will be finalized. Lead and galvanized requiring replacement (GRR) service line replacements will continue with the goal to replace all lead pipes in the City by 2037.

### **How can I reduce my exposure to lead?**

- Flush your plumbing before using the water for drinking or food preparation.
- Use only cold water for drinking and cooking. Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- Regularly clean your faucet aerators, or your faucet's screen. Sediment, debris, and lead particles can collect in your aerator. If lead particles are caught in the aerator, lead can get into your water.
- Use a device that filters the lead out of the water. Look for products certified by NSF/ANSI std 53 for removal of lead and follow all manufacturer's guidelines for installation and use. The EPA has a consumer tool on their website to help customers find effective point of use and pitcher filters. <https://www.epa.gov/water-research/consumer-tool-identifying-point-use-and-pitcher-filters-certified-reduce-lead>
- If you have a lead or galvanized requiring replacement service line, have it replaced. Contact a plumber for more information.

### **How do I know if there's lead in my water?**

You can't see, taste, or smell lead. The only way to know if lead is present is to have your water tested.

### **Can I get my water tested for lead?**

Yes. If you would like the water in your home or building tested for lead, please email your request to [LeadServiceLine@bethlehem-pa.gov](mailto:LeadServiceLine@bethlehem-pa.gov).