City of Lake City
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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Is our water safe to drink?

Your drinking water comes from a groundwater source: four wells ranging from 130 to 163 feet deep that draw water from a water table aquifer. The water coming out of these wells continues to be safe for drinking. The water drawn from the wells is subject to lead testing every 3 years and routine state testing for quality and safety. The City of Lake City has never had results from testing that exceeded action levels. Lead level exceedances in the home would be derived through an old service line on your property (pre1940) which connects your home to the City's water main, or the internal plumbing of a home or building. Most homes built before 1986 contain copper plumbing with lead soldering.

How does lead get into drinking water?

Lead can enter drinking water when plumbing materials that contain lead corrode, especially where the water has high acidity or low mineral content that corrodes pipes and fixtures. The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead pipes, faucets, and fixtures. In homes with lead pipes that connect the home to the water main, also known as lead services lines, these pipes are typically the most significant source of lead in the water. Lead pipes are more likely to be found in older cities and homes built before 1986. Among homes without lead service lines, the most common problem is with brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and plumbing with lead solder.

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) has reduced the maximum allowable lead content -- that is, content that is considered "lead-free" -- to be a weighted average of 0.25 percent calculated across the wetted surfaces of pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings, and fixtures and 0.2 percent for solder and flux.

How often is our drinking water tested?

Lake City performs the required lead testing every three years, with the most recent test completed in 2022. It is important to note that our results have consistently shown levels far below the Action Level of 15 parts per billion (PPB). In fact, our 2022 testing results indicated a level of just 0.002 PPB, which is significantly below the EPA's action level of 15 PPB.

How is testing completed for our water system?

Testing is completed by taking samples from 20 random locations throughout the city.

What actions should I be taking?

The Minnesota Department of Health recommends taking these actions to minimize levels in residential tap water:

- **Let the water run** before using it for drinking or cooking. If you have a lead service line, let the water run for 3-5 minutes. If you do not have a lead service line, let the water run for 30-60 seconds. The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain.
- **Use cold water** for drinking, cooking, and preparing baby formula**.** Hot water absorbs more lead from pipes than cold water.
- **Boiling water does not reduce lead levels** and may actually increase them.
- **Test your water.** The only way to know if lead has been reduced by letting it run is to check with a test. If letting the water run does not reduce lead, consider other options to reduce your exposure. Many laboratories can test your water to see if it contains lead.
    - Search for Accredited Laboratories (https://eldo.web.health.state.mn.us/public/accreditedlabs/labsearch.seam) to purchase a sample container and get instructions on how to submit a sample.
- **Treat your water** or find an alternative source if a test shows your water has high levels of lead after you let the water run: Types of Point-of-Use Devices for Lead Reduction (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/factsheet/poulead.html)
- **Get your child tested.** Contact your local health department or doctor to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure. Find out more information about child lead poisoning prevention with Lead (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/lead/index.html).

What is the action level?

The Environmental Protection Agency has an action level of 15 parts of lead per billion parts of water (ppb) for public water systems. A public water system must take actions to reduce the amount of lead in the water if more than 10 percent of the water samples have lead levels over 15 ppb. This is an action level.

1PPB = 1 drop of water in an Olympic sized swimming pool!

What are the health effects of lead?

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body.

The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children.

Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead can be stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

What are other sources of lead?

Lead is rarely found in natural sources of water such as rivers and lakes or underground aquifers. You may be in contact with lead through paint, water, dust, soil, food, hobbies, or your job. The most common way for Minnesotans to come in contact with lead is through lead-based paint found in homes built before 1978.

Homes built before 1940 may have lead service lines that connect them to public water. Plumbing systems built before 1986 may have lead parts. New “lead free” pipes and plumbing parts may still contain 0.25% lead. Brass parts may also contain some lead. Note that many faucets are made of brass even if they do not have a “brass” color. The amount of lead that gets into drinking water depends on many factors, such as the amount of lead in plumbing materials, water chemistry, and water usage.

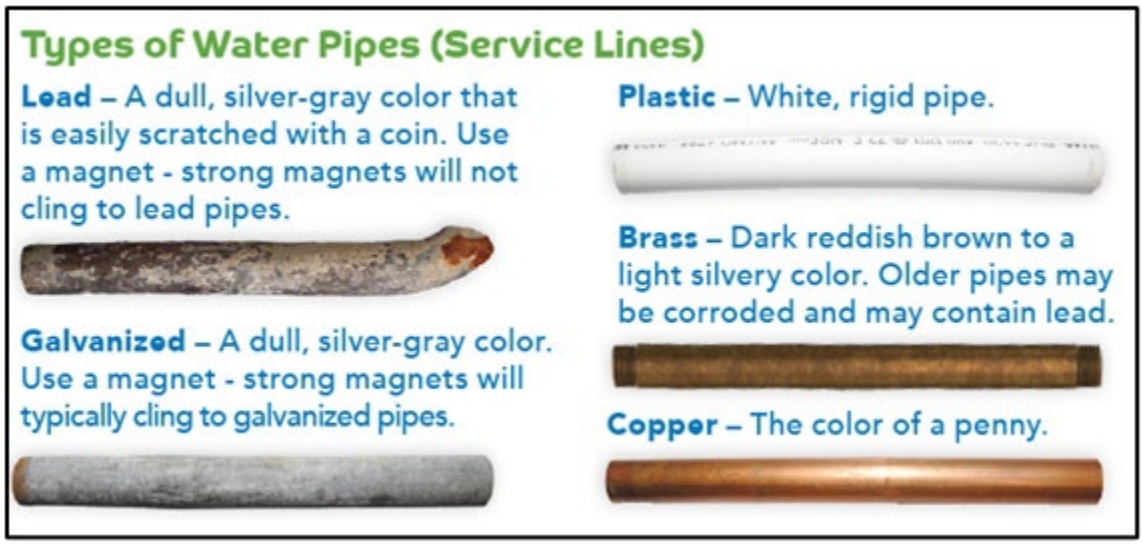
How can I find out what my pipes are made of?

1. **Inspect Your Service Line to Identify Lead**

   The water service line coming into many homes can help identify or confirm the pipe material. Click here to learn more about Identifying Lead or to assist with pipe material identification.

2. **The Most Common Pipe Materials**

   Service pipes can consist of many different materials. Typical service pipe materials include lead, galvanized steel, plastic, brass and copper as shown below:



3. **Identify your Pipe Material**

   You can identify your pipe material by checking your household water service connection inside the home, typically located in the basement. You can also contact a licensed plumber to inspect your pipes or call City Hall at 651-345-5383 or Public Works at 651-345-4711 or email ajackson@ci.lake-city.mn.us and we will help assist you.

How do I test for lead in my water?

You will need to contact a certified laboratory to arrange to have your water tested and pay for the testing. The City of Lake City does not recommend using an over-the-counter lead test kit sold at various retailers. You can search for certified laboratories that test for lead on the Minnesota Department of Health website at Search for Accredited Laboratories (https://eldo.web.health.state.mn.us/public/accreditedlabs/labsearch.seam)

What is the city doing about it?

The City of Lake City will continue to maintain its water system and provide its customers with high quality water. This is accomplished through its rigorous maintenance program including annual maintenance, conducting regular distribution system flushing, and routine repairs as needed. The city also completes a comprehensive assessment of its water system during its annual street reconstruction projects, which includes reviewing each water service for the existence of lead pipe and joints. In addition to system maintenance, regular testing of the water for contaminants, including lead, will continue. Each year, the City releases a Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), which summarizes the quality of water provided to its utility customers and includes information on how to protect the consumer from contaminants such as lead. To view our CCR please follow this link: https://www.ci.lake-city.mn.us/index.asp?SEC=316AB8BB-8394-4587-885A-B0FCA0472F5C&DE=A9AAF3E6-A35F-4490-93AF-06A8350856B2

What if my address shows as UNKNOWN?

An "unknown" indication means our records do not give clear guidance as to the material of your service line. Please send a text message with a picture attachment of your water meter and pipe and address to 507-652-9478.

Where can I learn more?

The City of Lake City website has all the following information and more.

- Lead in Drinking Water
- Lead in Well Water Systems
- Reducing Children's Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water
- Drinking Water in Schools

Many local, state and national agencies work on lead issues around the country. The webpages below are some key sources for more information about lead:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Lead
- EPA: Lead Hotline—The National Lead Information Center
- EPA: Drinking Water Contaminants—Standards and Regulations