



PRESS RELEASE

DETROIT WATER & SEWERAGE DEPARTMENT

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Detroit's water sampling results stay under the Lead & Copper Rule action level

- The city's most recent water testing is well under the state-mandated action level largely due to accelerated lead service line replacements, improved water treatment and customer education
- This is the sixth consecutive year under the new testing method for all Michigan communities
- DWSD has replaced more than 15,700 lead service lines and has an online inventory map
- There remains no confirmed case in the city of Detroit where a child tested with elevated blood lead levels and the sole source was drinking water

DETROIT – The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) is reporting that its results for the Lead and Copper Rule compliance testing is **7.8 parts per billion** (ppb), which is well below the state action level for lead remediation. The state action level has been 15 ppb for more than two decades and was reduced to 12 ppb as of January 2025. Since 2018, DWSD has replaced 15,700 lead service lines.

All communities with lead service lines must sample tap water in homes with lead service lines as required by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In Summer 2025, DWSD collected water samples from 51 homes with lead service lines. The 90th percentile of samples was **7.8 ppb**. DWSD's last reports were 13 ppb in 2024, 12 ppb in 2023, 2022 and 2021, 9 ppb in 2020, and 10 ppb in 2019 with the same sampling methodology that was required by EGLE beginning in 2019. A water supply exceeds the action level if more than 10 percent of all samples is over the action level.

DWSD Deputy Director Sam Smalley, who is the department's chief engineer and has led the program since its inception, explains, "The water supplied by DWSD is clean and safe for drinking, and at my own home I only drink tap water. Bottled water, which is not rigorously tested, is not allowed in my home nor in the vending machines at our DWSD facilities. Detroit has historically been at the forefront of national best-in-class water treatment and the 2025 results reaffirm this fact."

Smalley explains that the water leaving Detroit's water treatment plants, operated by the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), does not contain lead. The primary sources of lead in water are lead service lines, lead solder, and/or fixtures containing lead in the home. Since 2018, we have been replacing lead service lines and

providing pitcher filters to those residents and businesses as a precautionary measure. The department has accelerated the pace of replacement, in large part due to state and federal funding, since May 2023.

“This is welcome news for Detroiters, especially children, who are deserving of our very best efforts to ensure that everyone regardless of zip code, has access to clean water that is safe to drink,” said Chief Public Health Officer Denise Fair Razo. “We know that the number one source of lead poisoning in children is decaying paint and dust in homes that were constructed prior to 1978. The Detroit Health Department can help, with education on how to reduce lead exposure in homes, and referrals to get children tested. If anyone has any concerns regarding lead exposure inside their home, I encourage you to request a lead test from your child’s primary healthcare provider or contact the Detroit Health Department.”

The Michigan Lead and Copper Rule Testing Method

The Michigan Lead and Copper Rule, revised in 2018, is the most stringent in the nation. It changed the way lead samples are collected at Detroit homes and all Michigan communities. In the past, DWSD collected only the first liter of water out of the tap. Under the revised rule – used in testing in the past three years – both the first and fifth liter are collected. The first liter represents water from household plumbing and fixtures, and the fifth liter is more likely to represent water from the lead service line. The service line is the pipe which brings water from the water main in the street to inside the home or business. In Detroit, most service lines are either lead, copper or galvanized steel. Lead service lines are under two inches in diameter and are mostly at single family or duplex homes. The new sampling technique more accurately represents the range of lead in the drinking water in Detroit homes.

Lead in Drinking Water

The water leaving Detroit water treatment plants, operated by the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), does not contain lead, but lead can be released into drinking water from lead service lines and home plumbing as the water moves from the water mains to your tap. Beginning in 1945, Detroit stopped allowing the installation of lead piping for water service lines. Homes before 1945 are most likely to have a lead pipe that connects the home to the water main, known as a lead service line. The lead in lead service lines, household plumbing and fixtures can dissolve or break off into water and end up in tap water. The water provided to DWSD customers contains a food additive corrosion inhibitor to reduce leaching from lead service lines and other lead components, but lead can still be present in water at the tap. With EGLE approval following testing, beginning in October 2024, GLWA increased the dosage of the corrosion inhibitor for all communities it provides treated drinking water in order to provide improved water quality protection.

Health Effects of Lead

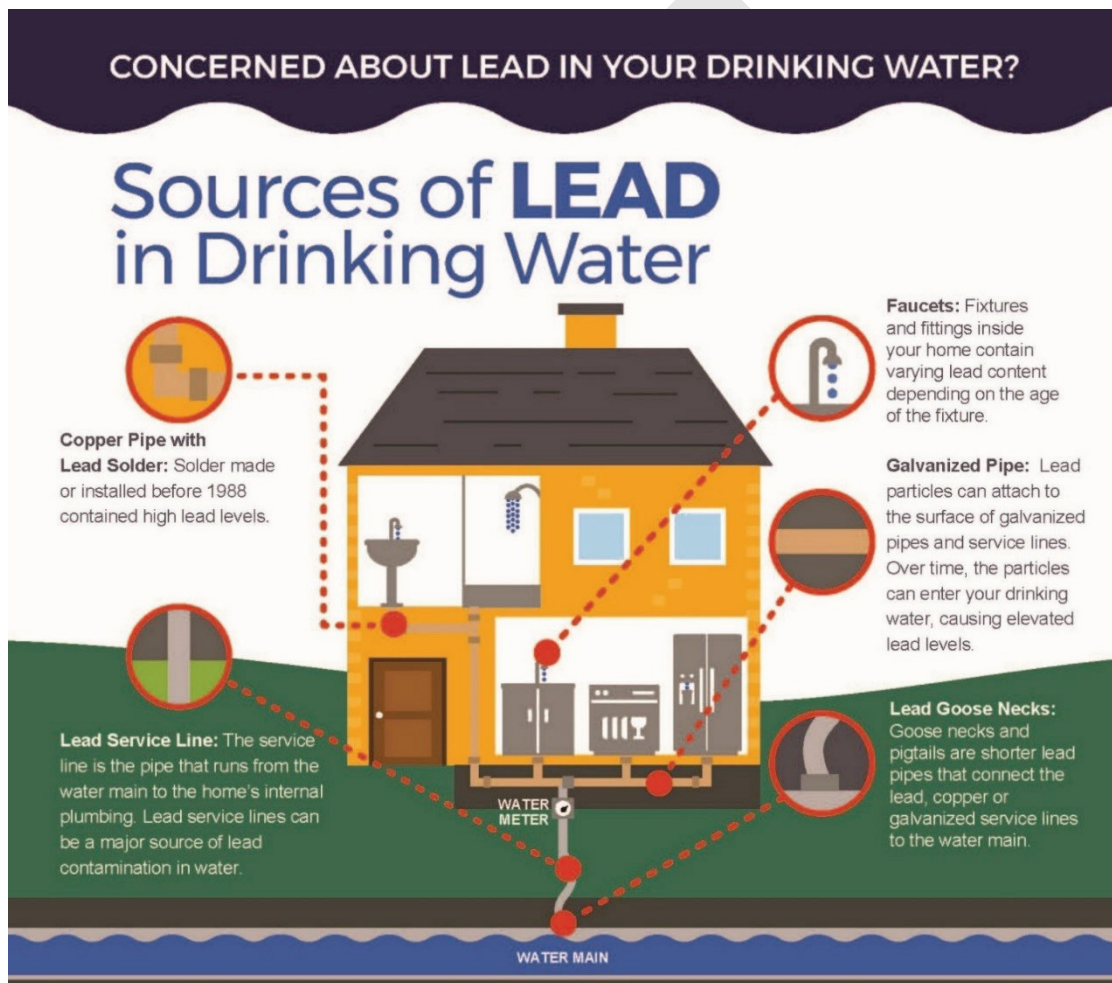
Lead can cause serious health and development problems. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Older homes can have many sources of lead exposure including paint, dust and soil. If you have questions about other sources of lead exposure, please contact the Detroit Health Department at 313-876-0133.

Sources of Lead

Drinking water is only one source of lead exposure. Some of the most significant sources, especially for children six years old and under, include lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust and soil. Because lead can be carried on hands, clothing, and shoes, sources of exposure to lead can include the workplace and certain hobbies. Wash your children’s hands and toys often as they can come in contact with dirt and dust containing lead. In addition, lead can be found in certain types of pottery, pewter, food and cosmetics. If you have questions about other sources of lead exposure, please contact the health department.

Most plumbing products such as service lines, pipes and fixtures contain lead. The infographic below demonstrates where sources of lead in drinking water could be in your home. Older homes may have more lead unless the service line and/or plumbing has been replaced. Lead-based solder and lead-based fittings and fixtures are still available in stores to use for non-drinking water applications. Be careful to select the appropriate products for repairing or replacing drinking water plumbing in your home. Even materials currently marked “lead free” have up to 0.25% lead by weight.

Galvanized plumbing can be a potential source of lead. Galvanized plumbing can absorb lead from upstream sources like a lead service line. Even after the lead service line has been removed, galvanized plumbing can continue to release lead into drinking water over time. Homes that are served by a lead service line should consider replacing galvanized plumbing inside the home.



Source: EPA

Lead Service Line Replacement Program

In 2018, prior to the revised Michigan Lead and Copper Rule, DWSD began replacing lead service lines as part of its asset management program when on the same street replacing the water main. Extensive outreach, including neighborhood meetings and information packets, to the owner/occupant is done prior to construction. The city owns the portion of the service line from the water main to the stopbox (turn-on/off valve typically in the front yard). The property owner is responsible for the service line from the stopbox to inside the house. Therefore, DWSD gets owner/occupant permission to replace lead service lines when its crews encounter them after visually verifying service line material at each house by excavating around the stopbox during scheduled water main replacement and neighborhood-by-neighborhood lead service line replacement. With owner/occupant permission, the lead service line is replaced with copper at DWSD's expense through its Capital Improvement Program and state and federal funding sources.

DWSD Chief Strategy Officer Anil Gosine shared, "With expanded contractor capacity and DWSD employee crews all replacing lead service lines, we have moved from about 700 annually to more than 4,000 per year. With more than 72,000 lead service lines remaining, we continue to prioritize the most vulnerable neighborhood areas first by using DWSD, city permit and U.S. Census data as well as predictive modeling from BlueConduit to prioritize the locations."

In compliance with the LCR, we have also sent letters to all addresses with known lead and galvanized lead service lines and service lines with unknown material which may be lead, galvanized or copper. This is based on predictive mapping using verified service line data, City permits and other data. The map is available at <https://detroitmi.gov/waterservicelinemap>.

Steps You Can Take to Reduce Your Exposure to Lead in Your Water

- **Run your water to flush out lead.** The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain. Therefore, if your water has not been used for several hours, run the water before using it for drinking or cooking. This flushes lead-containing water from the pipes. If you **do not** have a lead service line, run the water for 30 seconds to two minutes, or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature. If you **do** have a lead service line, run the water for at least five minutes to flush water from both the interior building plumbing and the lead service line.
- **Use only cold water for drinking and cooking.** Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more easily into hot water.
- **Use only filtered water or bottled water for preparing baby formula.**
- **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead levels. In the event DWSD issues a boil water advisory due to low water pressure (such as caused by a large water main break), water users in the designated advisory area will be advised to boil water before using for cooking, drinking and brushing your teeth. Residents with lead service lines should **only boil filtered water** — not water directly from the tap.
- **Consider using a filter to reduce lead in drinking water.** The Detroit Health Department recommends that any household with a child or pregnant woman use a certified lead filter to reduce lead from their drinking water. Look for filters that are tested and certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 53 for lead reduction.

Some filter options include a pour-through pitcher or faucet-mount systems. If the label does not specifically mention lead reduction, check the Performance Data Sheet included with the device. Be sure to maintain and replace the filter device in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to protect water quality.

- **Get your child tested.** Contact the Detroit Health Department at 313-876-0133 or your healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure.
- **Identify older plumbing fixtures that likely contain lead.** Older faucets, fittings, and valves sold before 2014 may contain higher levels of lead, even if marked “lead-free.” Faucets, fittings, and valves sold after January 2014 are required to meet a more restrictive “lead-free” definition but may still contain up to 0.25 percent lead. When purchasing new plumbing materials, it is important to look for materials that are certified to meet NSF standard 61.
- **Clean your aerator.** The aerator on the end of your faucet is a screen that will catch debris. This debris could include particulate lead. The aerator should be removed monthly to rinse out any debris.
- **Test your water for lead.** To request for your water to be tested, please visit www.detroitmi.gov/leadsafe and search “lead and copper sample request form.” If you do not have Internet access, please call the Detroit Lead Safe Resource Line at 313-267-8000 and press option 7 for further assistance.
- **Add your home to the DWSD replacement wait list.** When you confirm the existence of a lead service line at your house, take a photo near the water in your basement or crawl space and add your home to the DWSD Lead Service Line Replacement Program wait list. Go to www.detroitmi.gov/LSLR.

Additional information regarding lead, including “Frequently Asked Questions about Lead in Drinking Water” can be found on the City of Detroit’s website at www.detroitmi.gov/leadsafe or visit EGLE’s website at www.michigan.gov/MILeadSafe.

About the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) delivers clean water and collects sanitary sewage and stormwater from more than 230,000 accounts, representing a residential population of nearly 700,000. DWSD’s water system consists of more than 2,700 miles of water main and 29,000-plus fire hydrants, and the combined sewer collection system has nearly 3,000 miles of sewer piping, more than 90,000 catch basins and 16 green stormwater infrastructure projects within the city of Detroit. Since June 2019, DWSD has committed \$100 million per year to begin to address the aging infrastructure, including replacing lead service lines. To learn more about DWSD or to request water services, make payments, apply for affordability programs, or report water or sewer emergencies, call DWSD Customer Service at 313-267-8000, use the Improve Detroit mobile app, or visit www.detroitmi.gov/dwsd.

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