



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC  
UTILITIES**

## City of Richmond Lead Free Water Program FAQs

**Is there lead in Richmond's drinking water?** Richmond's drinking water does not contain lead when it leaves the treatment plant. However, instances of lead leaching into water can occur from lead water service lines and internal plumbing. Galvanized steel pipe may also contain lead if it was ever downstream of a lead pipe and is therefore considered to be a lead service line.

**What are the health effects of lead exposure?** Lead exposure can damage the brain and kidneys and interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen through the body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, the elderly, and pregnant/nursing women. Effects of lead in the brain have been linked to lower IQs in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by even low levels of lead. Lead is stored in the bones and can be released later in life. During pregnancy, lead from the mother's bones can be passed to the unborn child, which may affect brain development.

**Who is responsible for the water service line connecting a property to the City's water distribution system?** A water service line is the pipe that delivers water to your home from the City's water main in the street or alley, through the City's water meter and into your home or business. These lines often enter homes in basements or crawl spaces. The portion of each water service line on public right-of-way is owned by the City (City-side). The portion of the service line on private property is owned and maintained by the property owner (customer-side). The meter is typically near this transition in ownership. Property owners are responsible for internal plumbing.



Per a federal rule, the City is responsible for identifying the material of all service lines and removing lead service lines within its legal and physical control by 2037.

Therefore, the City is responsible for removing lead pipe on the City-side. The City is using grant funds (non-City funds) and seeking authorizations from private property owners to perform replacements on the customer side.

**How do I determine if I have a lead service line?** Regardless of whether you rent or own, please check the public City of Richmond Service Line Inventory (Inventory). [www.rva.gov/public-utilities/leadfreewater](http://www.rva.gov/public-utilities/leadfreewater) Type in your address, click on the dot, and read whether the City has identified the service line material. If the material is unknown on the customer side, please either complete the survey yourself, request that your landlord complete the survey, or request assistance from a plumber participating in our Service Line Inventory Grant Program, who can complete the survey for free, subject to certain limitations. A list of participating plumbers and program restrictions can be found here: [www.rva.gov/public-utilities/leadfreewater](http://www.rva.gov/public-utilities/leadfreewater)

**How is the City currently reducing risk for properties that have lead service lines?** To minimize risk of lead leaching from lead service lines on properties, the City has performed corrosion control at the Water Treatment Plant for decades. A chemical is added which lines lead service lines, providing a physical barrier. DPU periodically monitors the safety of its drinking water at the tap for lead. The results of these tests are shared with VDH (Virginia Department of Health) and published annually in the City's Consumer Confidence Report. DPU completed lead sampling in Summer 2025 and found that corrosion control is working. The results demonstrate compliance with VDH requirements for lead.

**What can I do to minimize lead exposure while I have a lead, galvanized, or unknown service line material?** Measures that can be taken to minimize exposure to lead include using cold water for drinking and cooking, flushing your pipes after they have been stagnant for several hours, and using a water filter that is certified to remove lead particles. You can find more information on ways to protect you and your family from lead exposure from the Environment Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/lead>

**What programs are in place to replace my lead service line?** Removal of lead is a shared responsibility between DPU and property owners.

- DPU's **block-by-block replacement program will be executed between now and 2037**. DPU plans to test pit the material of any service lines with unknown material on a selected block, obtain authorization for properties desiring private property lead service line replacements, complete the replacements, and repave the roadway. This work is funded by grant (non-City) funds. Disadvantaged neighborhoods, residential

properties, blocks with other utility work, and blocks with more complete service line material information are being prioritized given the limiting grant funding available.

- **A customer-initiated grant program** to replace individual lines is accepting very limited applications based on strict criteria until more funding is obtained.
- **Customers are welcome and encouraged to replace their customer-side service line** ahead of the block-by-block program coming to their neighborhood. Once the service line is replaced on the customer side, please call DPU immediately so that DPU can assess the material on the City side and replace as needed.

**The service line inventory indicates my service line was categorized based on a predictive model. What does this mean?** Due to the age of the system, the City does not have complete records of all service line materials, especially for on the customer side of service lines. The City developed a predictive model that forecasts material based on property records, water system attributes, and other data which correlates with material type. For instance, in general, lead service lines are more likely to be present at older buildings, near historic districts, and near other known lead service lines. The City's model was reviewed and approved by the Virginia Department of Health. The City's predictive model has a high accuracy, but the model does not provide a guarantee of material. We encourage you to inspect your service line and submit a survey to definitively know your service line material and improve the model accuracy.

**The inventory says my service line is "likely lead". What does this mean?** The City's predictive model predicts service line material. The data available for your location suggests that the service line may be lead, but it has not yet been verified through a record or visual observation. This information is provided to help raise awareness about the likely potential for lead at your property. You are encouraged to inspect your service line and submit a survey to confirm.

**What is the City of Richmond's Lead Free Water Program and where can I find more information?** The City's Lead Free Water Program is a multi-faceted program focused on reducing the risk of lead entering drinking water. The program includes corrosion control at the water treatment plant, periodic sampling and testing for lead, maintenance of a service line inventory, and execution of a lead removal program to meet federal mandates. Please visit the Lead Free Water website: [www.rva.gov/public-utilities/leadfreewater](http://www.rva.gov/public-utilities/leadfreewater). The program can be contacted by phone (804-646-8600) or email ([leadfreewater@rva.gov](mailto:leadfreewater@rva.gov)).