



Lead FAQs

Recently, extensive media coverage has taken place on lead in drinking water relative to the problems that the City of Flint, Michigan, has experienced with its water supply. The FAQs (below) will provide some basic information on lead in drinking water and what Moorhead Public Service (MPS) does to minimize the amount of lead in the water we supply.

Where does lead in water come from?

Lead is not found in Moorhead's source water and is not in the treated water when it leaves MPS' Water Treatment Plant. Lead contamination of drinking water comes from lead service lines (LSLs) that connect the watermain to the home, household plumbing fixtures, and lead solder.

Does Moorhead have lead service lines (LSL)?

Yes. The majority of LSLs in Moorhead typically went into the ground during the 1930s and 1940s. In rare instances, LSLs may have been installed as late as the 1970s.

MPS staff is currently sorting through historical water distribution system maintenance data to determine which homes in Moorhead have an LSL. The data will be placed into our Geographical Information System (GIS) database so it can be analyzed. Residents who are determined to have an LSL will be notified upon completion of this analysis. In the meantime, customers can hire a certified plumber to determine if they have LSLs or potential lead exposure from other sources.

What does MPS do to reduce lead in drinking water?

MPS uses a two-step treatment process to reduce leaching of lead from LSLs, plumbing fixtures, and solder in the home. First, the pH of the water is adjusted to approximately 9.2, which allows the water to produce a small amount of scale on the inside of pipes. In addition, MPS adds a corrosion inhibitor called polyphosphate to the water. The combination of these treatment techniques allows a small coating to form on the inside of water pipes so that lead does not leach into the water.

Does MPS have a plan to reduce the number of LSLs in Moorhead?

Currently, MPS replaces the MPS-owned portion of LSLs during routine watermain replacement projects as crews find them. After the historical maintenance data is placed into our GIS database, staff will be able to better analyze the data and investigate future strategies to replace LSLs.

What is a safe level of lead in water?

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set the maximum contaminant level goal (MCLG) for lead at zero. However, since a level of zero is not completely possible due to lead leaching from the plumbing inside of homes, an action level (AL) of 15 parts per billion (ppb) has been set. An analogy for the concentration of parts per billion is one sheet in a roll of toilet paper stretching from New York to London. Water systems are required to test for lead in drinking water by the Lead and Copper Rule to ensure the water meets EPA guidelines.

Has MPS ever violated the Lead and Copper Rule?

No. MPS has never been out of compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) since testing began in 1992. In fact, only 1.4 percent of the lead samples tested have been over the action level of 15 ppb since testing has been required by the LCR. These samples did not trigger an LCR violation because the 90th percentile level of samples was less than the action level.

What can I do to assure I am not exposed to lead in drinking water if I have an LSL or lead in my home plumbing?

If you believe your family is at risk of lead exposure from tap water, we encourage testing by a certified laboratory. The Fargo Cass Public Health Laboratory will test water samples for lead for \$20 per sample.

Families can take steps to reduce their risk of lead exposure by:

1. Flushing out the lines after a period of stagnation in order to get fresh water that is coming from the main. (Consider using the water to flush toilets or water plants in order to minimize waste.)
2. Purchasing a point-of-use treatment device certified to remove lead, and make sure the device is properly maintained.
3. Avoiding consuming water from the hot water tap, where lead is more likely to be present.

Additional Resources

- [AWWA: Lead Resource Community](#)
- [US EPA: Lead and Copper Rule](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Health](#)
- [Moorhead Public Service Water Quality Reports](#)