

# Waterloo Water Works

## Lead in Drinking Water FAQ

### What Do I Need to Know about the Risks of Lead in Drinking Water?

#### How does lead get into drinking water?

- Generally finished drinking water contains no lead.
- Lead may be present in piping and plumbing fixtures found in customers' homes.
- If drinking water is corrosive, it can corrode customers' lead service lines and plumbing fixtures, which can result in elevated lead levels in drinking water.
- Homes constructed before 1950 may be served by a lead water service line. Copper pipe installed before 1985 may have been installed using lead containing solder.
- To see if your property is in a neighborhood that has the greatest potential for a service line containing lead, view the "Potential Service Lines Containing Lead in Waterloo" map.

#### What are the health effects of lead in drinking water?

- Customers who drink water with elevated lead levels can suffer long term health impacts including damage to the liver, kidneys, or even the brain.
- Mental development issues are a significant concern for children exposed to lead contamination.
- In 1991, the Environmental Protection Agency published a regulation to control lead and copper in drinking water. The rule is part of the Safe Drinking Water Act, and it requires water systems to monitor drinking water at customer taps. If lead concentrations exceed the Action Level of 0.015 mg/L (15 parts per billion) in more than 10 percent of the taps tested, the water system must complete additional actions to control corrosion.
- Waterloo Water Works must test 30 at risk customers approved by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources every 3 years. These results have consistently come back at low levels. To see the latest lead and copper testing data, view "Lead and Copper Analytical Report".

#### What is Waterloo Water Works doing to control elevated lead levels?

- A number of factors impact how corrosive drinking water will be. These factors include the total amount of dissolved minerals in the water (calcium and magnesium), alkalinity, temperature, and pH.
- The water source for Waterloo Water Works is the Silurian-Devonian aquifer which is a limestone and dolomite water bearing formation about 250 feet underground. Since this water is in contact with the surrounding rock formation, it picks up these minerals and thus, makes the water "hard". The harder the water is, the less corrosive it is, and if you know the water in Waterloo, it is hard.
- Hard water tends to coat the inside of pipes with a fine scale. Now this might not be good for your water heater, but it is excellent lead and copper control because hard water is the opposite of corrosive water. No corrosion, no lead!
- Each day, water samples are analyzed to ensure Waterloo Water Works water is not corrosive.

## Could what happened in Flint, Michigan happen in Waterloo?

- Waterloo Water Works is paying close attention to what unfolded in Flint, Michigan. In North America, no one should have to question the safety of water at the tap. Flint underscores that Waterloo Water Works' first job is to protect the families we serve in Black Hawk County. Those of us involved in managing, treating, and delivering water share an obligation to protect public health.
- We do not have first-hand knowledge about what occurred in Flint, but this much seems clear: When Flint switched its water supply source, the new water was more corrosive and caused lead to leach from service lines and home plumbing – lead that ended up coming out of the taps.
- This kind of incident is unlikely here because Waterloo Water Works monitors water quality parameters on a daily or even hourly basis. Waterloo Water Works also follows a written Lead and Copper Sampling plan. This plan helps ensure we stay in compliance with the requirements of the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule.
- Waterloo Water Works tests for lead and copper contamination by asking customers with specific types of plumbing to collect samples in their house.
- These results are published annually in Waterloo Water Works Consumer Confidence Report, which describes the regulatory requirements Waterloo Water Works must meet or exceed. A copy of the Consumer Confidence Report is sent to every customer of the Waterloo Water Works. To see the latest CCR, view "Water Quality Report".
- Waterloo Water Works continues to be in compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule requirements.
- Supplying approximately 80,000 Cedar Valley customers with safe, affordable, and abundant drinking water is the mission of Waterloo Water Works. Water plays a key role in your health and Waterloo Water Works plays a key role in providing water you can trust for life.

## What can you do to limit your exposure to elevated lead levels?

- Use only water from the cold water tap for drinking, cooking, or preparing baby formula.
- Flush tap for 2 to 4 minutes before using the water for drinking or cooking when no water is used for several hours. It has been found that the longer the water sits in the line, the more likely it will pick up high amounts of lead. Showering, washing dishes, or doing laundry are effective ways to flush household plumbing before water is used for drinking or cooking.
- If your home has an in-home treatment device such as a softener or filtration device, they must be operated in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Improperly operated in-home treatment devices may increase the potential for water to become corrosive.

## Where can I find more information?

- To see if your property is in a neighborhood that has the greatest potential for lead containing service line, view the "Potential Service Lines Containing Lead in Waterloo" map.
- If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Please contact Waterloo Water Works at 232-6280 to get a list of qualified laboratories that will test your water for lead.
- Visit EPA's lead information website: <http://www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family#homleadsafe>