

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Lead in Fond du Lac Drinking Water

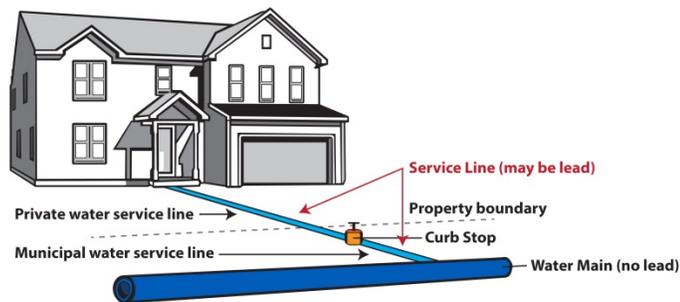
Public Works Department, City of Fond du Lac

If I am concerned about lead in my drinking water, what can I do to minimize exposure?

- Check by looking at pipe material where it first enters the building – typically a basement wall or floor facing the street. The material of pipe where it immediately enters the home usually indicates the same material continues to the terrace curb stop.
- Confirm the age and material of the water service in the right of way by contacting the City.
- Have your water tested for lead and other metals.
- Purchase a filter for your water.
- Have children (especially under age six) and pregnant women tested for lead poisoning.
- Use cold water for cooking or drinking (hot water tends to corrode pipes more).
- Run water for two to three minutes first thing in the morning, this tends to flush out metals that may have settled.
- Draw and refrigerate a large jug of water in the evening for use first thing in the morning.
- Inspect and clean out your faucet aerator, where flecks of metal may be caught.

Does Fond du Lac’s drinking water contain lead? Although the water in Fond du Lac’s wells and treatment plants does not contain lead, many of the services to our homes—and plumbing in the homes themselves—include lead pipes or solders. So the water coming out of plumbing fixtures in some people’s homes may contain traces of lead.

How many services in Fond du Lac contain lead? Water services (the small pipe between water mains and your home) have both a public and private component. The segment between the street and the curb stop (the small valve usually found in your terrace) is owned by the City, and is called the municipal water service line. (This will be referred to as a “City Service” here.) The segment beyond the curb stop is the private water service line (“Private Service”). There are currently 2,986 lead-containing City Services in the city. Hundreds of lead-containing Private Services have remained when the corresponding City Service was converted to a different material. The city has limited records of which Private Services may contain lead.



How can I know whether my service contains lead? Homes built after 1950 should not have lead service lines. Feel free to contact 920-322-3680 to find out if your home is one that the city records as having a lead-containing Private Service. If there are no records, a licensed plumber can check a pipe where it enters your home to confirm its material.

Who is responsible to maintain or replace water services? The City is responsible to maintain (and replace, if necessary) the City Service. The property owner is responsible for the Private Service. Wisconsin’s Public Service Commission *prohibits* the use of water utility funds to be used on private property, so the city cannot pay for new Private Services. However, the city is pursuing grant funding that could be used to pay at least a share of the costs to replace Private Services.

What has Fond du Lac done in the past to reduce lead in drinking water?

- For many years, Fond du Lac added polyphosphates to its water to prevent corrosion. Corrosion may allow some lead and copper to leach out of services that contain these metals, entering the water supply. Polyphosphates were no longer added to our water system starting in 2012, as a new filtration system now sequesters the iron that had created the need for polyphosphates in the past.
- We have replaced the public portion of lead service lines as part of annual street projects. Over the past decade, approximately 1,200 services have been replaced or about 30% of the total.

What steps is the city planning to take to reduce or eliminate lead in water services?

- Continue to replace lead-containing City Services as part of our annual street projects.
- For 2016, notify property owners with lead-containing Private Services that a street project will be changing the City Service in front of their home. It is recommended that the property owner replacing their Private Service, as well.
- Complete street projects in a way that makes the future replacement of a Private Service less expensive by extending new water service material to the property line. This way, if the private segment is completed in the future, the sidewalk will not have to be disturbed.
- Pursue grant funding that can be used to implement a **private lead replacement program**. This program would likely be on a first-come, first-served basis, and would provide a share of the cost to replace a lead-containing Private Service. Any home with a confirmed lead-containing Private Service would be eligible, although it makes sense to replace the Private Service if the City Service has been or is being replaced.
- For 2017 and beyond, notify property owners with homes with lead-containing Private Services about an upcoming street project at their property six to twelve months in advance, making sure that they're aware of the private lead replacement program and educating them on the elevated lead levels that may result when a City Service is replaced.
- Consider reestablishing a corrosion control program to minimize the lead leaching out of these services and private plumbing.
- Sample 30 DNR-approved homes in 2016 to investigate whether lead exposure is a problem in a significant number of our homes.

With the recent attention that has been brought to this issue, is Wisconsin DNR or the U.S. EPA considering any changes?

- Yes. The DNR is offering principal forgiveness for Clean Water Fund loans to disadvantaged communities to replace lead-containing Private Services (basically turning it into a grant instead of a loan). Fond du Lac qualifies as a disadvantaged community, and will be pursuing this funding.
- The enforcement standard for lead may become stricter. Currently, communities are only *required* to conduct a public education program and install system-wide corrosion control if 10% or more of homes sampled exceed lead levels of 15 parts per billion (ppb). The National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC) has recommended that the EPA reduce this to **zero ppb**, so *any* detection of lead may force cities to establish a lead-abatement program. The NDWAC also recommends replacing the entire water service, from the main to inside the home.

Where can I find out more?

- For general information about lead, visit <https://www.epa.gov> or <http://dnr.wi.gov> and enter "lead" and "drinking water" in the search bar.
- To find out more about your home's water service, contact City Water Business Office at 920-322-3680.