


August 22, 2024

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

To: Mayor and Members of City Council
From: Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager 
Subject: Notifications Required by Lead and Copper Rule

The purpose of this memo is to provide information about a major public notification initiative by Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW) that will begin soon.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is making changes to federal regulations involving lead in water. The Lead and Copper Rule Revisions to the Safe Drinking Water Act will take effect October 16, 2024, and require utilities to notify all customers who may have a lead service line on their property. This also includes customers who have lines made from galvanized steel, which may contain lead, as well as customers who have lines in which the material is unknown.

This notification effort is similar to the proactive approach by GCWW in 2016 when letters were sent to customers that may have lead lines along with educational information to help reduce their risk of lead exposure.

In GCWW's service area, there are an estimated 35,000 lines that meet the criteria. The utility will begin sending notification letters to customers during the week of September 2.

GCWW will send approximately 5,000 letters per week for 10 weeks to promote a more manageable volume of telephone calls and emails from customers who may have questions after receiving the letter.

A total of approximately 50,000 letters will be sent. This number includes multiple letters sent to rental properties. Letters will be sent to tenants, landlords and the owner's agent. Additionally, the notifications will be sent via email if GCWW has the customer's email address on file.

GCWW is also beginning a public awareness campaign about the letters. It will

include information posted on the website, social media posts, and a release to local media, including a planned article in *The Cincinnati Enquirer*.

It is important to note the presence of a lead line does not pose an immediate threat to customers. GCWW is focused on public health and produces millions of gallons of drinking water daily. There is no lead in the water when it leaves the treatment plant or when it is in the water mains in the distribution system. The risk for lead to enter drinking water comes if the pipes connecting the mains to the building, indoor plumbing, or fixtures are made of lead. However, GCWW uses a mixture of chemicals to coat the interior of service lines to minimize the risk of lead leaching into the water.

GCWW has had a robust lead service line education program since 2016, including extensive information on a dedicated website along with significant outreach and engagement efforts to better educate the community about the risks of lead.

- Customers may check the GCWW Online Lead Look-Up Map at <https://la.mygcww.org/do-i-have-a-lead-service-line/> to see if GCWW's records indicate that their home has a lead service line. Typically, buildings in the City of Cincinnati constructed after 1928 do not have lead service lines. GCWW's webpage also provides instructions on how to identify whether a line is made of lead, and tips for reducing exposure to lead in water including flushing and cleaning of aerators.
- Customers may also request a free lead test kit at <https://utility.cincinnati-oh.gov/WaterCheck/LeadAnalysis.aspx>.

It is expected that these letters could impact daily operations in some sections of the water utility:

- Call center volume may increase if customers have questions regarding the letter.
- Laboratory staff may be impacted by sampling requests.

GCWW staff is prepared to address these temporary shifts in operations.

The only method to fully eliminate the risk posed by lead is to replace lines and fixtures that contain the material. GCWW is working to replace all lead service lines in our service area at no cost to customers by 2037. GCWW has replaced nearly 6,000 lead lines since the launch of its Enhanced Lead Service Line Replacement Program in February 2018. GCWW currently replaces about 1,200 lines annually. The amount is expected to increase to about 3,600 annually in the next few years due to changes in federal regulations.

This memo is for informational purposes only, and no action is required by City Council.

cc: Natasha S. Hampton, Assistant City Manager
Cathy B. Bailey, Executive Director, GCWW