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What to do if you live in a building with lead pipes

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By **Matt Rocheleau**

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More than 3,500 buildings in Boston get their water via lead service lines, raising the specter that their water is tainted with lead, according to data tracked by the city.

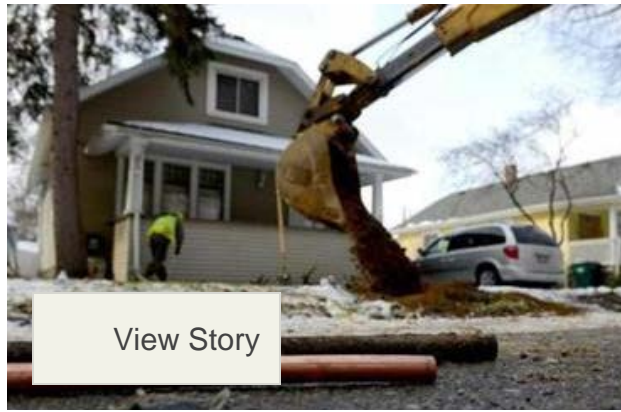
Service lines are pipes that connect individual properties to water mains that run beneath streets.

Boston Water and Sewer Commission data indicates there are 3,556 buildings in the city with such lines.

The lead from those lines may leach into the water running into the homes. Lead poisoning can cause serious health problems, particularly for young children.

People who have lead service lines should have their water tested and take steps to try to remove sources of lead from their plumbing, officials say.





Lead declines in Boston-area water supply, but caution still advised

More than 20,000 area buildings are fed by lead service lines that run from the main municipal water line.

What parents need to know about lead exposure

They can also take some simple steps to reduce lead exposure, such as briefly running faucets to clear any lead buildup in the service lines.

(The water that runs through mains in the streets has virtually no lead before it reaches service lines or individual buildings, officials say.)

Boston buildings with lead service lines

Use the search bar on the top right of the table to look up an address. To see a map of these buildings, [click here](#). (Note: The list includes some Brookline addresses located along the Boston border because they are served by the Boston Water and Sewer Commission)

Address	Neighborhood
1 Aldie St	Allston
1 Arcadia St	Roxbury
1 Atwood Sq	Jamaica Plain
1 Bellingham Pl	Boston
1 Boylston St	Jamaica Plain

1 Copley St	Roxbury
1 Dahlgren St	Dorchester
1 Duke St	Mattapan
1 F St	South Boston

Showing 1 to 50 of 3,556 entries

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SOURCE: Boston Water and Sewer Commission
MATT ROCHELEAU/GLOBE STAFF

If you suspect your property has a lead service line, here's what you can do

Officials suggest you consider the following:

- Check the list above. Note that the database of addresses may include some buildings that have already had their lead service lines replaced. The data also may not capture all buildings that have lead service lines. Any property with service lines installed prior to 1950 could have lead service lines, officials say.
- Contact the Boston Water and Sewer Commission to confirm whether your home has a lead service line. The commission says it will inspect any customer's service line if requested.
- Get your home's water tested at a lab that is certified by the state's Department of Environmental Protection. Being connected to a lead service line does not necessarily mean your water will have elevated lead levels.
- Run faucets on cold for 15 to 30 seconds to allow pipes to flush water out that may have been standing and is more likely to carry lead. This is particularly important if no water has been used from that faucet for several hours.
- Because it dissolves metals faster, avoid running hot water if you plan to drink, cook, make coffee, or otherwise consume it. If you need hot water, draw it cold from the tap and heat it on the stove.



- **Replace pipes that have lead.** If you are the property owner, call the Boston Water and Sewer Commission's lead hot line at 617-989-7888. Some homes may be eligible for financial assistance to have the lead lines replaced. Tenants whose building has a lead service line should contact their landlord or building manager.

Even if you do not have a lead service line, your water could still have elevated lead levels

Homes built before 1986 may have lead solder in their interior plumbing, and faucets made through 2013 may contain enough lead to contribute to elevated lead levels.

In fact, in the latest round of water testing in Boston — which included samplings drawn in September from 25 homes considered to be at risk for elevated lead levels — the lone home found to have lead levels exceeding federal standards is not believed to be connected to a lead service line, officials said.

Officials recommend that you consider the following:

- **Replace plumbing fixtures that may contain lead with new ones that have zero or low lead levels.**
- **Have an electrician check your wiring.** Corrosion within your plumbing that could release lead into the water may be greater when grounding wires from your home's electrical system are attached.
- **Remove loose solder and debris from faucets by removing strainers from all taps and running the water for 3 to 5 minutes.** Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated.

Other options include the following:

- **Use bottled water.** However, officials warn that this option can be significantly more expensive than using tap water.
- **Buy home treatment devices — such as filters, reverse osmosis units, and distillers — that have been independently verified as being able to reduce lead.** The National Sanitation Foundation has more details on this option.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)

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