



February 2022

## **SUBJECT: IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER**

Dear Northeast Rowan County Water System Customer,

At Rowan County and Salisbury-Rowan Utilities, our mission is to provide our customers with high quality water service, to promote public health and improve the quality of life. The main purpose of this letter is to alert you that your water may contain lead and copper and notify you of steps you can take to reduce lead exposure. The Northeast Rowan County Water System found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings; the source of this lead is customers' private service lines and/or internal plumbing. **LEAD CAN CAUSE SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND YOUNG CHILDREN.**

**PLEASE READ THIS LETTER CLOSELY TO SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER.**

### **Health Effects of Lead**

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

### **Sources of Lead**

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. The main sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil, and some plumbing materials. In addition, lead can be found in certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics. Other sources include exposure in the work place and exposure from certain hobbies (lead can be carried on clothing or shoes). Drinking water is also a possible source of lead exposure. Most sources of drinking water have no lead or very low levels of lead. Most lead gets into drinking water after the water leaves the local well or treatment plant and comes into contact with household plumbing materials containing lead. These include lead pipes, and lead solder (commonly used until 1986), as well as faucets, valves, and other components made of brass. Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. EPA estimates that 10 to 20 percent of a person's potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water. Infants who consume mostly formula mixed with lead-containing water can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

## **Important Steps You Can Take to Reduce Lead in Drinking Water**

### **Run your water to flush out lead.**

If water hasn't been used for several hours, run water for at least 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking. Note: You may want to capture the initial running water for uses other than drinking or cooking, such as for watering plants.

### **Regularly clean faucet aerators.**

Remove particulate matter that may contain lead.

### **Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.**

Lead dissolves more easily into hot water.

### **Do not boil water to remove lead.**

Boiling water will not reduce lead.

### **Look for alternative sources or treatment of water.**

You may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter. Be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 1-800-NSF-8010 or [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org) for performance standards for water filters.

**If your water contains lead or copper above the Action Level established by the USEPA, Rowan County will provide to you a point-of-use filter that will serve as an interim measure to protect consumers from lead exposure in drinking water.** Replacement cartridges will be provided to each consumer at the manufacturer's recommended interval until 90th percentile lead levels in the NEWS are below the Action Level. *For questions with your Brita pitcher and filter replacements, please direct calls to the 120Water support line at 1-800-674-7961.*

### **Test your water for lead.**

If you have not already had your water tested for lead or need a replacement pitcher filter kit, please contact Rowan County Administration at: 704-216-8180 to find out how to get your water tested, and the location of labs that perform private testing.

### **Get your child tested.**

Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure.

### **Identify if your plumbing fixtures contain lead (replace, if necessary).**

Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows end-use fixtures, such as faucets, with wetted surfaces containing a maximum weighted average of 0.25% lead to be labeled as "lead-free." Note: Prior to January 4, 2014, fixtures could contain up to 8% lead and be labeled as "lead free." Visit the NSF Web site at [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org) to learn more about lead-containing plumbing fixtures.

## **WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT IS BEING DONE?**

The Northeast Rowan County Water System (NEWS) began distributing public water supply in July 2018 to customers who were previously supplied from private groundwater wells. Rowan County owns the water system, and SRU serves as the Contract Operator and Operator in Responsible Charge (ORC). SRU operates a water treatment plant which supplies the City of Salisbury and NEWS. SRU provides corrosion control treatment by adding a corrosion inhibitor and adjusting the finished water pH. This treatment is

designed to minimize the potential for lead contamination. The SRU public water system has met requirements for Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) compliance. The source of lead in drinking water at some homes in the NEWS is customers' private service lines and/or internal plumbing.

As part of establishing a new drinking water system, in October of 2018, SRU was required to test for the presence of lead and copper in Rowan County's NEWS; samples were taken by NEWS customers from their kitchen faucets. The LCR requires NEWS to collect samples from ten (10) homes within the newly constructed water system; the homes that were selected for testing were chosen because of the year the homes were built. Based on the year built, the homes selected may have copper plumbing with lead solder.

The system's 90th percentile lead concentration has exceeded the Action Level during each 6-month monitoring period, including the most recent round of sampling conducted during the second half of 2021. Three of 10 sample sites had lead levels above the Action Level. The Action Level is the concentration of lead in drinking water that the EPA has determined requires additional actions by a water system to reduce lead exposure.

The County and SRU are taking steps to enhance water quality and further minimize the potential for lead release from private plumbing in NEWS. In 2021, SRU made adjustments to the pH and corrosion inhibitor dose at its water treatment plant. The County is constructing a corrosion control booster station to enhance corrosion control treatment and minimize lead levels within NEWS. The corrosion control booster station is expected to begin operation during the second quarter of 2022.

### **For More Information**

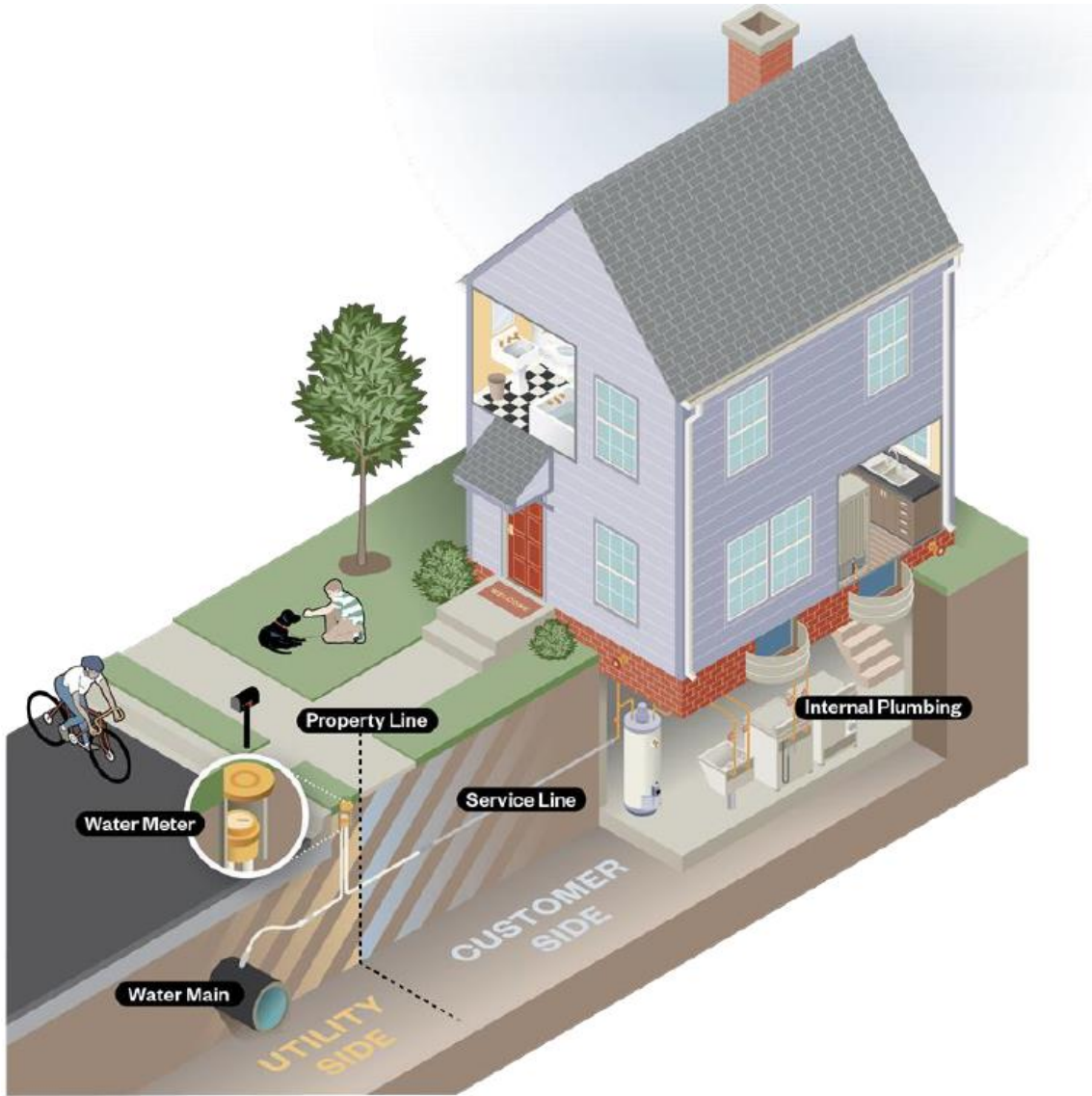
Please visit the Rowan County's website at <https://rowancountync.gov/1662/Water> for more information about what Rowan County and Salisbury-Rowan Utilities are doing to reduce lead exposure in customers' private service lines and/or internal plumbing within the Northeast Rowan County Water System.

Please contact Rowan County Administration at: 704-216-8180 to find out how to get your water tested for lead or if you need a replacement pitcher filter kit. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) or contact your health care provider.

Sincerely,



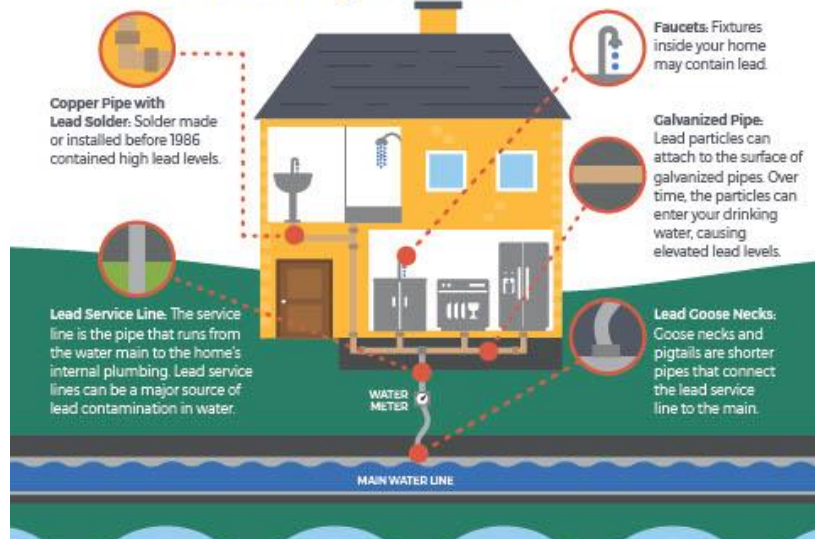
Jim Behmer, P.E.  
Director  
Salisbury-Rowan Utilities





CONCERNED ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER?

# Sources of LEAD in Drinking Water



## Reduce Your Exposure To Lead



Use only cold water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula. *Boiling water does not remove lead from water.*



Regularly clean your faucet's screen (also known as an aerator).



Consider using a water filter certified to remove lead and know when it's time to replace the filter.



Before drinking, flush your pipes by running your tap, taking a shower, doing laundry or a load of dishes.

To find out for certain if you have lead in drinking water, **have your water tested.**

## Replace Your Lead Service Line



Water systems are required to replace lead service lines if a water system cannot meet EPA's Lead Action Level through optimized corrosion control treatment.

Replacement of the lead service line is often the responsibility of both the utility and homeowner.

Homeowners can contact their water system to learn about how to remove the lead service line.

## Identify Other Lead Sources In Your Home

Lead in homes can also come from sources other than water. If you live in a home built before 1978, you may want to have your paint tested for lead. Consider contacting your doctor to have your children tested if you are concerned about lead exposure.



For more information, visit: [epa.gov/safewater](http://epa.gov/safewater)