Frequently Asked Questions

Information on Lead and California's Lead Service Line Inventory

(Last updated January 26, 2026)

What are the results of the most recent lead service line inventory?

As of January 2026, there have been no service lines identified in California as being made from lead, out of approximately 10 million total service lines reported. While there are still approximately 600,000 lines in California classified as having unknown material in the inventory, it is likely that none, or a very small percentage, of those will be lead service lines.

There are approximately 850 lead connectors and 12,000 galvanized-requiring-replacement (GRR) service lines. Galvanized pipes located downstream of a service line that cannot be confirmed as non-lead must be replaced due to the potential for lead accumulation within the line.

For the most current data, please visit California's service line inventory website and mapping tool: Statewide Service Line Inventory Data - Lead and Copper Rule[1]

What are the health effects and highest risk sources of lead in California?

Exposure to lead can cause serious health effects in all age groups. Infants and children can have decreases in IQ and attention span. Lead exposure can lead to new learning and behavior problems or exacerbate existing learning and behavior problems. The children of women who are exposed to lead before or during pregnancy can have increased risk of these adverse health effects. Adults can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney, or nervous system problems.

[1] https://gispublic.waterboards.ca.gov/portal/apps/experiencebuilder/experience?id=53f1ff6b98014598a4101de4ca9e54e9

There are approximately 2 million known lead service lines in the United States[2]. As of January 2026, California has no reported lead service lines. Lead lines are required to be replaced under the new federal Lead and Copper Rule Improvements.

According to the California Department of Public Health's report titled "California's Progress in Preventing and Managing Childhood Lead Exposure" the highest occurrence of housing-related sources of lead exposure among children with elevated blood lead levels was from paint, followed by dust, soil and then water, with water being the least likely cause.[3] Therefore, addressing blood lead levels in California requires a slightly different strategy compared to other states that have a significant number of drinking water lead service lines. This means that while water concentrations are important, Californians should first consider the leading sources of lead in California, such as deteriorated lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust and soil, as primary factors of lead exposure.

Can lead still be found in the drinking water even if my water provider's service lines are not made of lead?

Yes. While there are no reported lead lines in California at this time, the inventory does not reflect piping, solder and fixtures inside a building that may have lead components that can corrode over time. **Among homes and other structures without lead service lines, the most common source of lead is brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and plumbing with lead solder.** [4]

[2] U.S. EPA Service Line Inventory, https://sdwis.epa.gov/ords/sfdw_pub/r/sfdw/sdwis_fed_reports_public/service-line-inventory
[3] California's Progress in Preventing and Managing Childhood Lead Exposure, page 37. https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/CLPPB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/CLPPBReport2024.pdf
[4] US EPA. "Basic Information about Lead in Drinking Water | US EPA." US EPA, 7 Feb. 2019, https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water

There were two laws that were enacted to decrease lead concentrations in the materials used for internal plumbing, a federal law in 1986[5] and a state law in 2010[6]. **If there are fixtures (faucets, valves, etc.) in your home that were manufactured before Jan. 1, 2010, they may contain higher amounts of lead because of the materials used in manufacturing.** Replacement of pre-2010 internal plumbing and fixtures inside buildings can help lower lead levels.

What can I do if I am concerned that there may be lead in my drinking water?

You should first contact your water provider to see if they offer assistance with lead sampling of drinking water in your home. Some water systems offer free testing. If they do not offer support or you are on a private well, you will need to contact a certified commercial laboratory to inquire about water sampling for lead and the cost. Search for a certified laboratory near you using this website, California ELAP Certified Laboratories[7].

For the procedures on how to collect a sample of your drinking water for lead, click on the following link: Directions for Homeowner Tap Sample Collection[8]

It is very important that you collect the water sample according to the procedures listed otherwise your results may not reflect the actual lead concentrations.

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[5]After June 19, 1986, the Safe Drinking Water Act required the use of "lead-free" pipe, solder or flux in the installation or repair of (1) public water systems or (2) any plumbing in a residential or non-residential facility that is connected to a public water system and provides water for human consumption.
[6]In 2010, California law (Health and Safety Code section 116875) further reduced "lead free" to mean that the maximum allowed lead content is: 0.2 percent lead in solder and flux & 0.25 percent lead in wetted surfaces of pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings and fixtures, as determined by a weighted average
[7]https://waterboards.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bd0bd8b42b1944058244337bd2a4ebfa
[8]https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/lead_sampling_homeowners/homeowners-sampling-guidelines-english-v2.pdf

What can I do if laboratory results show that lead is present in my drinking water after laboratory sampling?

Laboratory results will indicate one of two concentration levels:

1) **No lead detected (also known as non-detect or not reported)**

   This is an indication that your water should be considered safe. It is possible that trace levels of lead do exist below the detection limit of the laboratory instrument, but these are too low to quantify with confidence.

2) **Lead detected.** The U.S. EPA action level is currently 15 micrograms per liter but will be decreasing to 10 ug/L in the future. However, no level of lead is considered safe. If lead is detected, you should consider taking steps to decrease your potential lead exposure. Steps may include:

   a. **Clean your Faucet Aerator.** Regularly removing and cleaning your faucet's screen (also known as an aerator). If lead particles are caught in the aerator, lead can get into your water.
   b. **Run your Water.** The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain. This can be especially so in seldom used bathroom sinks or other seldom used sources where the water sits in the pipes unused for weeks or months. Before drinking, flush your home's pipes by running the tap until the water is cold, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. If you live in a large apartment complex or other large building, you may not be able to adequately flush the internal plumbing lines, but a three-second flush will usually clear water from the faucet and lower lead levels if it is a source.
   c. **Use cold water.** Do not use hot water from the tap for drinking, cooking, or making baby formula as lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Boiling water does not remove lead from water.
   d. **Using a home water filter certified to reduce lead.** Using a pitcher type filter, a refrigerator water tap with a filter, or an under-the-sink filter can reduce lead in drinking water. If you use a filter, it should be NSF/ANSI certified to remove lead, typically either NSF/ANSI Standard 53 or

Standard 58[9]. Read any directions provided with the filter to learn how to properly install, maintain, and use your cartridge and when to replace it. Using the cartridge after it has expired can make it less effective at removing lead. Do not run hot water through the filter.

e. **Talk to your doctor and/or your water system.** If you have elevated lead concentrations in your water, you may wish to discuss the results with your doctor. Family doctors and pediatricians can perform blood tests for lead, provide additional support on the health effects of lead, and if necessary, coordinate with local environmental health officials to evaluate all the potential lead sources in your environment. You should also contact your water system so that they are aware of the results and see if their drinking water is a possible source and if they may be able to take additional steps to optimize water quality in your area.
f. **Replace internal plumbing and/or fixtures.** Among homes and other structures without lead service lines, the most common source of lead in water is brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and plumbing with lead solder[10].

What about schools and daycares, what do we know about lead in their water?

Schools and daycares generally come in two different classifications:

(1) schools/daycares that provide their own water, usually from a well, or

(2) schools/daycares that receive water from a water provider.

Schools/daycares that provide their own water are subject to ongoing lead monitoring because they are considered a public water system and you should be notified if there is elevated lead in the drinking water above the action level.

Public K-12 schools and daycares that purchase drinking water from a public water system and had buildings constructed before January 1, 2010 were required to sample for lead as part of a legislative requirement[11] by July 1, 2019. The purpose of

[9] https://www.nsf.org/news/drinking-water-treatment-units-stricter-requirements-lead-reduction-cert
[10] https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water
[11] California Assembly Bill 746, effective January 1, 2018.

this requirement was to see if internal plumbing at the schools/daycares resulted in high lead levels in drinking water. Results can be found on the following website:

Lead Sampling of Drinking Water in California Schools[12]

This was an early California-only lead sampling effort that ended in December 2020. Assembly Bill 2370, effective January 1, 2020, subsequently required that childcare centers continue monitoring every five years. More information can be found on the State Water Board's website: California Childcare Center Lead Sampling Program.[13]

The new federal Lead and Copper Rule Improvements and Assembly Bill 1096 (2025) will require additional sampling and public notification of lead concentrations in school and daycare drinking water.

Is money available to replace lead service lines in water systems and/or lead in pipes in my house?

The State Water Board applied for and received Lead Service Line Replacement funds from the U.S. EPA in 2022 and 2023. As it currently stands, the Lead Service Line Replacement funds appropriated by Congress are eligible for replacement of lead service lines, galvanized lines that were downstream of lead service lines, and lead connectors. "Premise plumbing", meaning internal plumbing or fixtures within homes or school properties, are not eligible for this funding based on the federal guidelines.

The state received very few funding applications from water systems, despite significant outreach efforts. As the lead service line inventory progressed, results showed a low level of lead service lines in California. The State's data does not show sufficient funding needs for existing Lead Service Line Replacement funds it has already received. Therefore, California elected not to apply for additional 2024 and 2025 Lead Service Line Replacement funds and is instead focusing on using existing funds for replacement demands.

[12] https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/leadsamplinginschools.html
[13] https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/programs/lsicc/