

# NEWPORT NEWS WATERWORKS

## LEAD FACT SHEET



DATE: November 2020

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### **BACKGROUND**

Lead is a common metal that is found throughout the environment in soil, certain types of pottery, porcelain, pewter, lead-based paint, household dust and sometimes, drinking water.

Lead seldom occurs naturally in water supplies such as rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials in pipes and plumbing fixtures such as faucets. In older homes, the most likely source of lead is lead-based solder that has been in common use for years to seal copper plumbing (newer homes are required to use lead-free solder and lead-free materials by federal law). When water stands in lead pipes, plumbing systems with lead components or lead fixtures for several hours, the lead may “leach” or dissolve into the drinking water. This means that the first water drawn from your tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, may contain elevated levels of lead – if the home has any lead-based pipes, solder, or fixtures.

### **HISTORY**

Prior to 1960 typical installation procedures included the use of lead goosenecks in distribution systems for connecting the water service line to the water main in the street. Goosenecks are lead pipes typically 1-3 feet in length, and are located where the service line is connected to the water main in the street. Since that date, Waterworks has not used or installed any lead pipes. Between January 1987 and March 1988 known lead service pipelines (from the water main to the meter) were removed from the Waterworks distribution system and the remaining lead goosenecks are replaced when routine maintenance is performed.

In the early 1990s, Waterworks started a corrosion control process. During the water treatment process, a corrosion control substance, Zinc Orthophosphate, is added to the water. Zinc Orthophosphate creates a film along the inside of pipes and fixtures that helps to keep lead from “leaching” into the water. Waterworks tests for lead monthly as the water leaves the two treatment plants (Harwood’s Mill and Lee Hall).

Currently, extensive testing is done based on EPA criteria, and samples are taken from customers’ home. The results of this testing indicate no lead is leaching. The levels of lead in our water have been well below any federal action level for many years. They are so low that the Virginia Department of Health only requires Waterworks to test the water every three years.

### **PLEASE NOTE**

Now that you know what Waterworks has done to reduce lead in drinking water, here are some precautions you can take:

- Flush your tap – let your tap run before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water has gone unused for more than 6 hours. Flushing the tap means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15-30 seconds. Instead of just wasting that water, capture it in a watering can and use it to water plants.
- Draw cold water for cooking – hot water is likely to contain higher levels of lead
- Check your home plumbing – make certain only lead-free solder and other lead-free materials and fixtures are used when plumbing repairs or plumbing work is done.
- If you believe your family is at risk of lead exposure from tap water, we encourage you to have your water tested by a certified laboratory. Waterworks will test your water once for free.
- Newport News Waterworks publishes an annual water quality report which includes information on lead.