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Water Supply Operations
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Lead Service Line Fact Sheet

Background

In 2021, U.S. EPA promulgated the [Lead & Copper Rule Revisions](#) (LCRR), with a compliance date of October 16, 2024. The LCRR required all community water supplies to create an inventory of all service lines connected to their distribution system and list the material(s) of each service line. The service line material is categorized as one of the following:

- Lead - a service line that is made of lead or where a portion of the service line is made of lead
- Galvanized Requiring Replacement (GRR) - a galvanized service line that is or ever was downstream of a lead service line or lead status unknown service line
- Lead status unknown - a service line whose pipe material has not been demonstrated to be a lead service line, GRR, or non-lead
- Non-lead

The LCRR also required systems to distribute an annual Public Notice to the property owner of each service line identified as lead, GRR, or lead status unknown.

Under the LCRR, systems were required to submit their initial service line inventories to the Iowa DNR by November 16, 2024, and also make the inventories publicly available. Systems that serve over 50,000 people are required to make their inventories available online.

Shortly after promulgating the LCRR, EPA announced their intent to further strengthen the rule. In 2024, EPA promulgated the [Lead & Copper Rule Improvements](#) (LCRI), with a compliance date of November 1, 2027. The LCRI contains additional requirements, including the following:

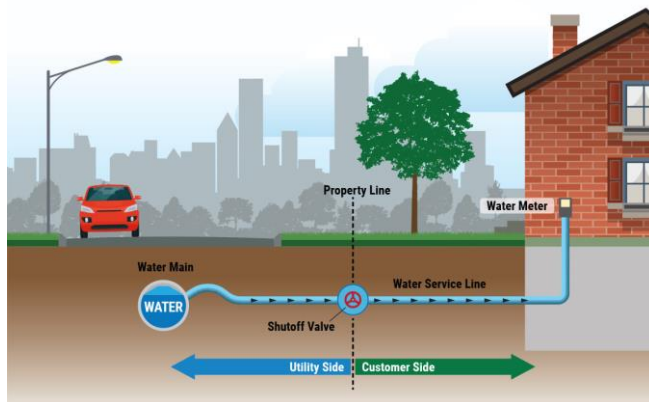
- Systems must submit a baseline service line inventory in 2027 and update the inventory annually
- Systems must continue annual Public Notice of service line material to customers served by lead, GRR, or lead status unknown service lines
- Systems must replace all lead and GRR service lines within 10 years of the LCRI compliance date

On March 7, 2025, [Iowa House File 876](#) (HF876) was introduced. HF876 amends Iowa's real estate disclosure laws to increase transparency regarding potential health risks associated with lead pipes. The House passed HF876 on April 15, 2025 and the Senate passed the bill on May 14, 2025. On June 6, 2025, Governor Kim Reynolds signed the bill into law with an effective date of January 1, 2026. The law defines a "lead service line" as a pipe made of lead, including a galvanized service line if it is downstream of a lead or unknown material service line. The law requires sellers to disclose the presence of a lead service line in real estate transactions.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a service line? A service line is the underground pipe connecting the water main to the interior plumbing in a building. This includes the pipe from the water main to the water meter, but does not include any interior plumbing. Common service line materials include copper, plastic, galvanized steel or iron, and lead.

Who owns the service line? The ownership of a service line varies from system to system. The entire service line may be owned by the utility, split ownership may occur where the portion from the water main to the curb stop is owned by the utility and the portion from the curb stop to the building is owned by the property owner, or the entire service line may be the responsibility of the property owner. In Iowa, it is common for all or a portion of the service line to be owned by the property owner. Property owners should contact their utility if they have questions regarding service line ownership.



Split ownership illustration



Property ownership illustration

Was there a federal lead ban? In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead pipes, but allowed those already in the ground to remain. The lead plumbing ban had a compliance date of June 19, 1988. If a home was constructed after 1988 in Iowa, it is expected that the service line for that home was constructed using material other than lead. Public water supply systems were allowed to designate the service line of homes built after 1988 as non-lead when developing their service line inventories. Local ordinances or codes may have provided earlier timeframes for designating a service line as non-lead.

How do I determine the material of a service line at a property? If you are the property owner, you should have received public notification from your utility if your service line is lead, GRR, or lead status unknown. As mentioned above, if your home was built after 1988, the service line can be classified as non-lead. If you have questions about the material of your service line, you should contact your utility. If you are not the property owner, you may contact the utility serving the property and request a copy of the system's service line inventory. Systems are required to make their service line inventory publicly available under the LCRR.

What should I do if my service line is identified as lead status unknown? We encourage all property owners to work with their utility to identify the material of their service line. Property owners may need to grant access to their property to utility staff for the purposes of identifying service line material. Some utilities allow property owners to self-identify the material of their service line, which may include submitting a photo to the utility. If you have questions about identifying the material of a lead status unknown line, you should contact your utility.

Who is responsible for the cost of lead service line replacement? The federal LCRI regulation states that all water systems must replace all lead and GRR service lines under the control of the water system. Where a water system has access (e.g., legal and physical access) to conduct full service line replacement, the service line is under its control and the water system must replace the service line. Where a water system has legal access to conduct full service line replacement only if property owner consent is obtained, the water system must make a "reasonable effort" to obtain property owner consent. The LCRI does not specify who is responsible for paying for the replacement. Each utility must make an individual decision on who is responsible for the replacement cost, and this may depend on multiple factors, including the service line ownership policy for the utility. The utility may cover the entire cost of the replacement, replacement cost may be split between the utility and the property owner, or the property owner may be responsible for the entire cost. Questions regarding the cost policy for service line replacement should be directed toward the utility serving a property.

Is there federal grant money available to property owners for lead service line replacement? We are not aware of federal grant money available directly to property owners. Utilities may apply for federal funding or loans through the State Revolving Fund.

What is the average cost of a lead service line replacement? The cost of replacing a lead service line can vary widely and depend on many factors, such as site-specific conditions or challenges, accessibility, replacement methods, local policies, material costs, length and depth of service line being replaced, etc. The EPA estimates an average cost of \$4,700, ranging from \$1,200 to more than \$12,300 per line.

Where can I find more information on the Iowa lead service line disclosure? This article from the [Iowa REALTORS Blog](#) contains more information and a short video on the new law.