

# Service Line Stewardship Program



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Howard County's Service Line Stewardship Program?

The Service Line Stewardship Program (SLSP) aims to comply with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2021 Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) and proactively meet the requirements of the 2027 Improvements (LCRI), which were developed to boost protections in drinking water from lead. Through the SLSP, we successfully submitted an inventory of all the water service lines in our water distribution system to the Maryland Department of the Environment in October 2024, as required by LCRR. This initial inventory consisted of a number of service lines that are listed as being made from an unknown material in our records. We have been working diligently to identify these unknowns and update our inventory, which is due in November 2027 under LCRI.

### Will this program affect my water bill?

No. The program does not directly impact the cost of water.

### What is a water service line?

A service line is the underground pipe that connects your home to the water main.

### Where can I locate my service line?

It can typically be seen where it enters your home in the basement or crawl space.

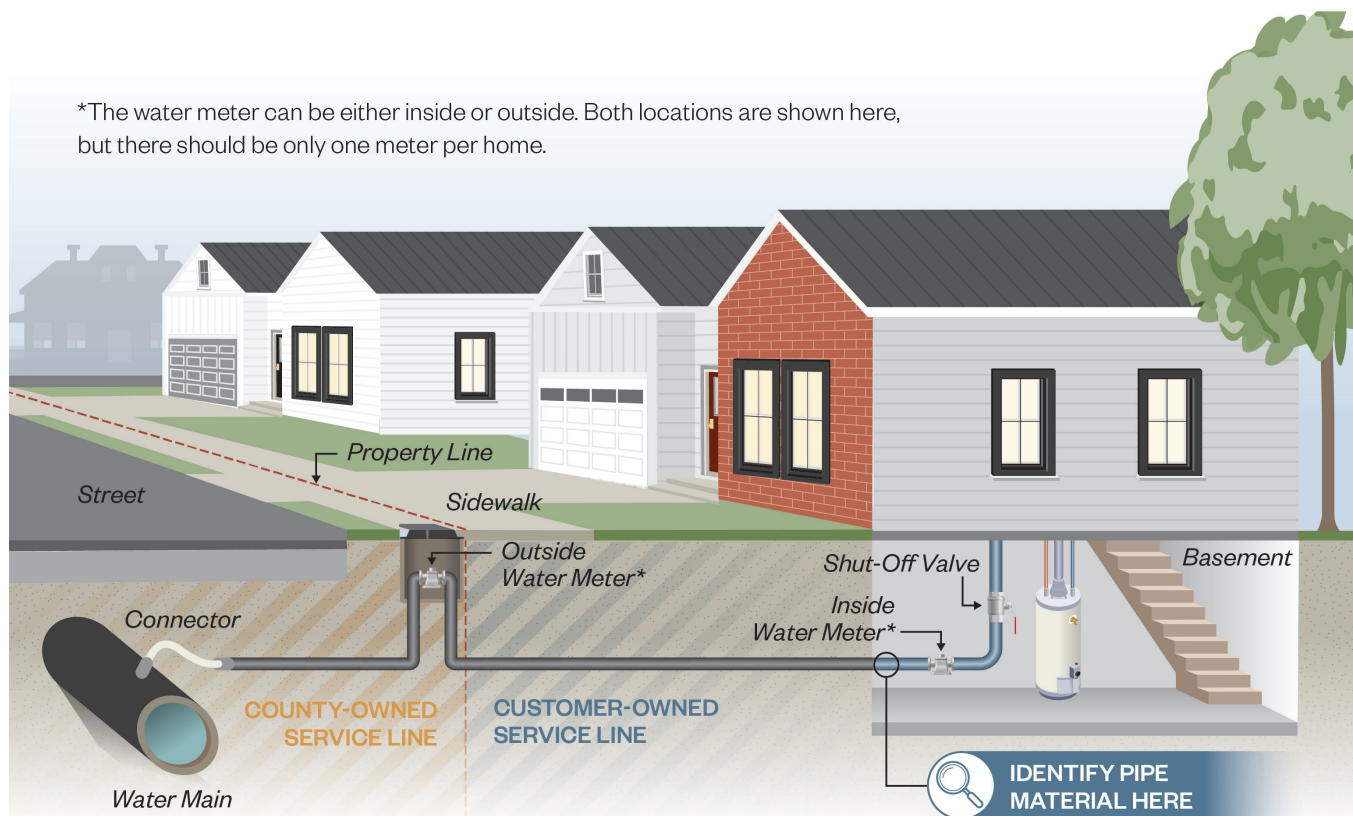
### Do the LCRR and LCRI mean I have lead pipes?

No. A primary purpose of the regulation is to identify the material of water service lines and eliminate any lead and galvanized requiring replacement piping that may exist in the distribution system.

### Where can I find more information regarding the Service Line Stewardship Program?

All information can be found on the program webpage at [www.howardcountymd.gov/public-works/service-line-stewardship-program](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/public-works/service-line-stewardship-program).

\*The water meter can be either inside or outside. Both locations are shown here, but there should be only one meter per home.



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## Service Line Identification

### Why did I get a notification in the mail saying that my service line is made from an unknown material?

Under both LCRR and LCRI, we are obliged by law to send an annual notification to all our customers with piping made from an unknown material until their service line is identified and confirmed to be non-lead.

### Why is my service line material listed as unknown?

The portion of the service line that distributes water into your home was not installed by the County, so there is limited information about the material used.

### Why does the material of my service line need to be identified?

LCRR and LCRI require an inventory of the entire service line, including the portion owned by the customer. By validating the material of your service line, you are helping to comply with the regulation as well as identifying any outdated service line materials that need replacement to protect your health and that of any persons consuming the water at the property.

### Are all residential, commercial, and industrial property owners being asked to complete the survey?

No. Only properties with a service line listed as being made from an unknown material are being asked to complete the survey.

### What will Howard County do with the survey results?

Validated service line material information will be added to the inventory submitted to MDE. Service lines constructed using lead or GRR materials will be flagged for replacement.

### How will I know if my survey submission has been validated?

If you've completed all the steps correctly — including, locating your water service line, performing the scratch and magnet test in the correct spot, and uploading two clear, well-lit photos — you'll receive a confirmation email letting you know that your survey has been accepted.

If any information is missing or unclear, you'll receive an email stating that your survey submission is invalid.

### What happens if I determine I have a lead or GRR service line?

Do not be alarmed. If you determine you have a lead service line, notify Howard County by completing the survey. Although lead service lines have the potential to leach lead into drinking water, the water chemistry in the Howard County distribution system is carefully managed to help prevent this from happening. This means that lead may not necessarily be in the drinking water even if the service line is made from lead.

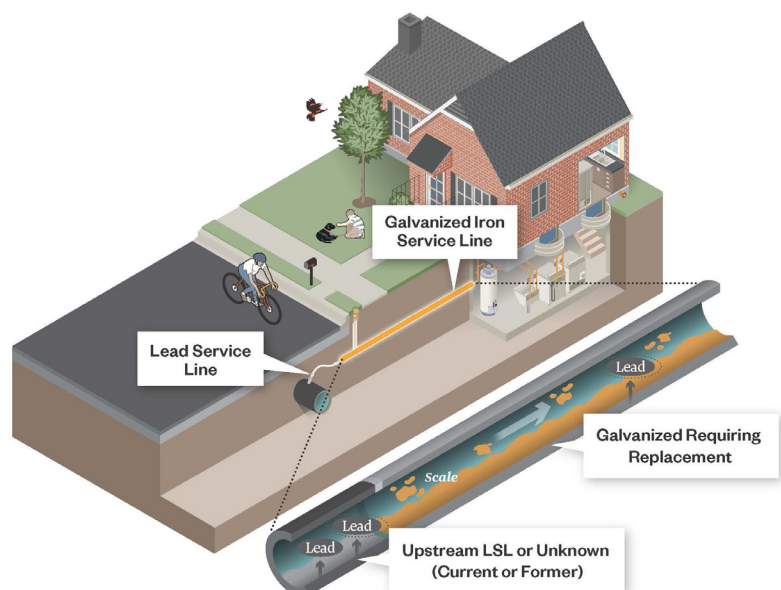
### Will my water service line need to be replaced?

Replacement is only necessary if one of the following conditions is met:

1. The service line was constructed with lead
2. The service line is galvanized and downstream of a lead or unknown service line - also known as GRR

### What is a galvanized service line?

Galvanized pipes are iron pipes that have been dipped in a protective zinc coating to prevent corrosion and rust and were used as an alternative to lead pipe for service lines. Galvanized pipes can capture lead released from upstream lead service lines, which can be released into the home, requiring their replacement and resulting in their categorization as GRR.





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## **Do all galvanized water service lines need to be replaced?**

No. Only galvanized service lines that are currently or were potentially previously downstream of a lead service line will need to be replaced.

## **Will I have to pay out of pocket or hire a plumber to replace my service line?**

We are actively assessing the potential cost implications of complying with LCRR and LCRI as well as the potential contractors and plumbers that may be needed for replacements. The results of this assessment will be included in a service line replacement plan that will be shared with our customers upon completion.

## **If I'm on a private well, does this program affect me?**

No. LCRR and LCRI do not apply to water service lines on properties served by private wells. If you are concerned about lead in your drinking water, please refer to the guidance on the EPA website: [www.epa.gov/privatewells](http://www.epa.gov/privatewells).

## **Will my water service be interrupted should my water service line require replacement?**

Replacement of water service lines will require a temporary interruption of water service to remove the existing service line, and install and connect the new one.

## **How long will it take to replace the water service line? What materials will be used?**

Water line replacements typically take between one to four hours to complete. Materials approved by the County will be used to replace the service line.

## **Will my property be disturbed? Who is responsible for restoration?**

Water line replacements often do result in property disturbance. However, this is kept to a minimum. The contractor and/or plumber will be required to restore the property back to pre-construction condition for private side replacement. The County is responsible for the public side property restoration at no cost to the customer.

## **Water Quality**

### **How does lead get into drinking water?**

Lead is seldom found as a natural contaminant in drinking water and generally originates from lead-based plumbing materials. Lead can enter drinking water when plumbing materials containing lead corrode over time. These materials include pipes made of lead, lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, and brass and chrome-plated brass faucets. Lead service lines are typically the most significant source of lead in the water. In Maryland, these materials are more likely to be found in homes built before 1972.

### **Do all lead service lines contaminate drinking water?**

Not necessarily. All lead service lines have the potential to leach lead into drinking water, but the water chemistry in the distribution system is carefully managed at treatment facilities to help prevent this from happening.

### **If a service line constructed with lead is identified on my property and then replaced, how can you ensure there is no longer lead in my water?**

Howard County will assist in flushing the line following replacement and can provide follow-up sampling to ensure there is no longer lead coming from the service line serving the home.

### **If there are lead-based materials in my service line or premise plumbing, what steps can I take to reduce lead exposure?**

Please refer to "Tips for Reducing Lead Exposure" in the Resources section of the webpage: [www.howardcountymd.gov/public-works/service-line-stewardship-program](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/public-works/service-line-stewardship-program).