



**FACTS  
ABOUT LEAD**



This fact sheet provides information about lead and tap water how we test and treat our water and also helpful tips to minimize your risk.

# PWSA's top priority is to provide customers with the safest and highest quality drinking water; we care about the health of our residents and reliability of our system.

Concerns about lead in drinking water became national news when high lead levels were found in Flint, Mich. That situation is not comparable to our water because Flint has many other issues involved including polluted source water, and the fact they didn't treat the high corrosive properties of that source water. This incident has many PWSA customers wondering if they should be concerned about lead in Pittsburgh's drinking water, and we want to provide you with information on the topic and steps you can take to minimize your risk.

## **First, City of Pittsburgh residents should rest assured their water is fine for drinking, cooking and other uses. PWSA takes precautions to ensure the safety of the water reaching our customers' homes. Here are some facts to consider:**

- **PWSA's source water is very good.** The Allegheny River contains only trace amounts of naturally occurring lead, and those trace amounts do not adversely impact water quality or public health. Lead that is detected in drinking water is leached from lead service lines and indoor plumbing.
- **PWSA treats our source water with chemicals that control water's natural corrosive properties (pH).** This reduces the likelihood of lead leaching into your water. PWSA continually monitors ways to optimize our treatment process and modifies that process as more effective means to control corrosion are identified. This is a step that has been taken as recently as January 2016.
- **PWSA's test results for lead in drinking water have consistently been below the federal water quality standard for lead.** In the more than 30 years PWSA has been operating, we have had zero water quality violations for any reason.

## **What Can Customers Do to Add Another Layer of Safety?**

There are two precautions customers can take at any time, both of which are free: flush standing water out of your plumbing and have your water tested.

- According to government experts, you should use cold water for drinking and cooking. If your water hasn't been used for more than six hours, run the cold water to flush lead-containing water from the pipes. See Page 5 for detailed instructions on how to do this
- Customers who are concerned about lead levels in their drinking water can request a free lead test from PWSA by calling 412-782-7554.

PWSA will assist homeowners to determine if their service lines are lead, and if found to contain lead, we will replace the portion of the service line owned by PWSA at no cost to the homeowner. Because piping and fixtures inside the home are the responsibility of the homeowner, we also advise homeowners on how to best reduce the possibility of lead leaching.

The surest way to prevent lead leaching from service lines and plumbing fixtures is to remove the lead lines and fixtures.



### **Lead Testing History and Requirements.**

In 1991, the EPA Lead and Copper Rule came into effect, which limits the concentration of lead and copper allowed in public drinking water measured at the customer's tap.

In Pittsburgh, the EPA Rule is enforced by the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), which mandates and oversees testing for lead in our water. Currently, ACHD enforces a regulation that requires PWSA to test 50 homes every three years.

In accordance with EPA regulations, corrective action must be taken if lead concentrations exceed the action limit of 15 parts per billion (ppb) in more than 10 percent of tap samples. The PWSA tested lead level is under that action limit of 15 parts per billion (ppb). For any water system that exceeds this limit, action steps will include additional corrosion control and public education to explain to customers what they can do to reduce exposure to lead. In order to be proactive on this issue, PWSA is educating customers and offering free lead testing to help provide peace of mind for anyone worried about lead in their tap water.

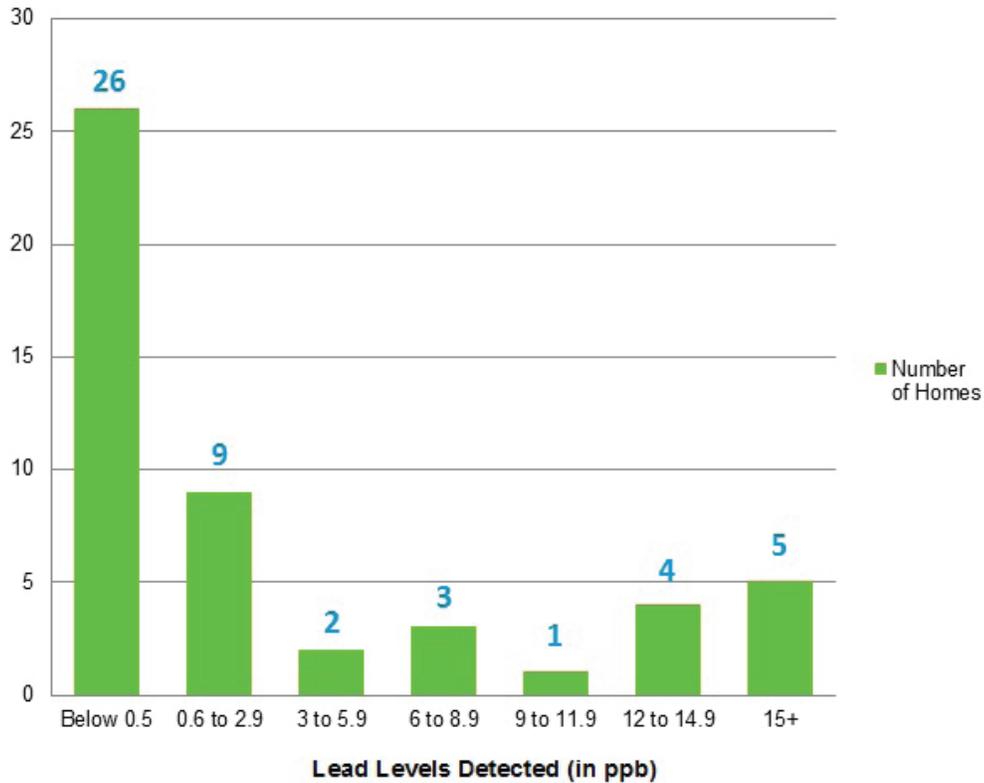
While still under the 15 ppb limit, our published lead testing results readings have increased since 1991. However, because testing procedures have changed over the years, it's difficult to detect trends. When testing started in 1991, only 50 percent of the properties tested included those most likely to have a lead issue. Today, the rule has changed to mandate that 80 percent of the homes tested are those most likely to have a lead issue.

We will be testing for lead again per ACHD requirements in late summer 2016.



**2013 Test Results**  
 (Tests Will Again Be Conducted in Summer 2016)

**2013 Lead Results in Homes**



This chart illustrates a breakdown of the 2013 lead test results from all 50 test homes, grouping each result into categories based on the lead levels detected in parts per billion (ppb). The reported lead reading for 2013 was 14.7 ppb, which is under the action limit. This number is the result of collecting 50 samples. The EPA and ACHD allow up to five homes, or 10 percent of the homes sampled, to be above the action limit, with the sixth highest home test result used to report results for the system as a whole.

Of the five homes that tested above 15 ppb, the two highest readings were determined to be the result of a testing error. With the other three homes, PWSA worked with the homeowners to determine the source of the problem and come up with the best solution to reduce their risk.

Even with the most recent reported level of 14.7 ppb being close to the action limit of 15 ppb, it's important to note that of the 50 homes tested in 2013, 70 percent had lead levels below 3 ppb, and 52 percent measured trace-lead amounts below 0.5 ppb.



## What Can I Do?

As was mentioned before, there are steps you can take if you are concerned that you may have lead in your home, including:

### Refresh Your Water

- Use only cold water for cooking, drinking and especially preparation of infant formula. Hot or boiling water is actually worse for these uses if you have lead piping because lead dissolves more easily into hot water.
- Flush your taps by running the cold water for 30-60 seconds or until it reaches a steady temperature to flush lead-containing water from the pipes.
- If your home has a reading at or above 15 ppb for lead, and you haven't used your water in the past six hours, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends running your cold tap water 1-2 minutes to flush any lead-contaminated water from your pipes. If you know your service line is lead, and you haven't used your water in the past six hours, CDC recommends running your cold tap water for 5 minutes to flush the pipes. Please click on the link below for more information from the CDC on lead.
- Remove and clean the strainer/aerator screen on your faucet on a regular basis.

### Test Your Pipes

- If you're worried about your property's pipes, you can [contact PWSA](#) and we will send you a lead test kit at NO cost to you.
- Simply follow the instructions and send your kit back to us, and our laboratory will return your results.

[RECEIVE YOUR FREE TEST KIT BY CALLING THE PWSA LAB AT 412-782-7554](#)

## For More Information:

U.S. EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline  
800-426-4791  
[www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead)

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)  
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
[www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm)

PWSA Emergency Dispatch 24/7  
412-255-2423  
[www.pgh2o.com/quality-drinking-water](http://www.pgh2o.com/quality-drinking-water)

Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD)  
Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Program at  
(412) 350-4048  
[www.achd.net/lead](http://www.achd.net/lead)

