



Lead in Drinking Water: A Permanent Solution for New Jersey

Summary of Recommendations from the Jersey Water Works Lead in Drinking Water Task Force

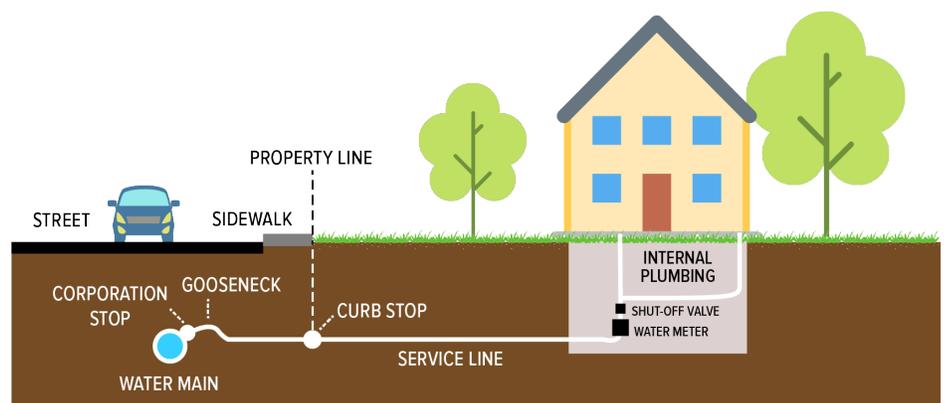
Every person in New Jersey deserves a safe, healthy environment that nurtures their full potential. Lead exposure thwarts this basic goal. Across New Jersey, lead in drinking water threatens human health, especially for children.

New Jersey can virtually eliminate lead in drinking water in 10 years through the actions outlined in this report. The recommendations start with a holistic state-level campaign to address lead from all sources: water, paint, and soil. The report then lays out a package of legislation that would simultaneously require and empower water utilities to replace dangerous lead pipes regardless of ownership. The report estimates a cost of \$2 billion that could be funded by ratepayers and a state subsidy program for the most impacted communities. It also identifies the important state agency regulations, outreach programs, and transparency measures to ensure safe drinking water in homes, schools, and child care facilities. These actions should be complemented by other efforts to improve water infrastructure and address lead exposure from all sources, including paint and soil.

The Jersey Water Works Lead in Drinking Water Task Force — 30 experts with diverse perspectives charged with developing a set of comprehensive solutions to address lead in drinking water — concluded that, while the solution is costly, it is a one-time investment that New Jersey must afford. Long-term cost reductions in health care, special education, and lifetime earning potential will far exceed the investment. Though we lack precise records of where lead service lines are located, we know enough to get started, and we know how to obtain the missing information to complete the work. This is a problem we can — and must — solve.

Where Lead in Water Comes From

Most New Jersey residents take for granted that their tap water is healthy and safe. Unfortunately, however, one contaminant — lead — has proven to be a stubborn exception. Increased scrutiny following the Flint, Michigan crisis revealed that in communities nationwide, lead in pipes and plumbing continues to leach into drinking water, even though water from treatment plants is virtually lead-free. New Jersey is no exception. The task force’s report focuses on lead service lines; the pipes that connect water mains to homes and smaller apartment buildings; and lead plumbing and fixtures found in homes, schools, childcare centers, and other buildings. Based on a graphic from the Lead Service Line Replacement Collaborative.



Recommendations

The Jersey Water Works Lead in Drinking Water Task Force identified 19 interdependent actions, which, as a package, can virtually eliminate lead in drinking water in 10 years.

1 COORDINATE A STATE-LEVEL CAMPAIGN FOR A LEAD-FREE NEW JERSEY.

Given the serious public health impact of exposure to lead in water, paint, and soil; its broad reach into many New Jersey communities; and the ongoing need to raise awareness, a comprehensive state campaign would maximize efficiency and ensure that all residents can adequately protect themselves.

- 1.1 Declare lead to be a public health threat. (executive order)
- 1.2 Coordinate state efforts across agencies. (executive order)

2 PERMANENTLY REPLACE LEAD SERVICE LINES (LSLS) IN 10 YEARS THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE, INTERDEPENDENT LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE.

Since lead service lines are responsible for approximately 50-75% of lead-in-water contamination, and interim measures like corrosion control and filters are not fail-safe, LSLs must be replaced. A comprehensive legislative package should require water utilities to run a 10-year LSL replacement program that offers no-cost, mandatory upgrades to property owners. Supporting legislation would require accurate LSL inventories, disclosure of the presence of lead pipes in homes at the point of sale and rental, and adequate funding solutions.

- 2.1 Require LSL disclosure at home sale and rental. (legislation)
- 2.2 Require LSL inventories with annual updates. (legislation)
- 2.3 Require water utilities to fully replace LSLs within 10 years. (legislation)
- 2.4 Offer LSL replacement to all property owners at no cost. (legislation)
- 2.5 Ensure property owner participation in the no-cost program. (legislation)



Photo from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

3 CREATE A 10-YEAR FUNDING PROGRAM FOR LSL REPLACEMENT.

LSL replacements are estimated to cost between \$5,000-6,700 each and approximately \$2 billion statewide. Two kinds of funding solutions are needed. The first authorizes utilities to use rate revenues for LSL replacement, even though a portion of the line may be under private property. The second provides state funds to water utilities for which the necessary rate increases would impose undue hardship on ratepayers.

- 3.1 Authorize rate recovery across service areas. (legislation)
- 3.2 Create a \$500 million state subsidy program to assist water utilities with the greatest need. (legislation)

4

ENACT PROTECTIVE RULES AND PROGRAMS TO ENSURE SAFE DRINKING WATER.

In many New Jersey communities, the threat from lead in water also involves indoor lead plumbing, including pipes, fixtures, and soldered connections. The solution to keeping people safe involves a combination of actions: regulatory changes to strengthen existing protective measures implemented by water utilities, a revamped approach to public communications, and further research on the level of exposure that should prompt action to protect public health.

- 4.1 Strengthen DEP drinking water regulations. (regulation)
- 4.2 Make state home inspection and improvement programs holistic. (policy/budget)
- 4.3 Educate at-risk populations through a network of community organizations and local health agencies. (policy/budget)
- 4.4 Research health-based thresholds and expanded blood testing. (research)

5

ENSURE QUALITY WATER IN CHILD CARE FACILITIES AND SCHOOLS.

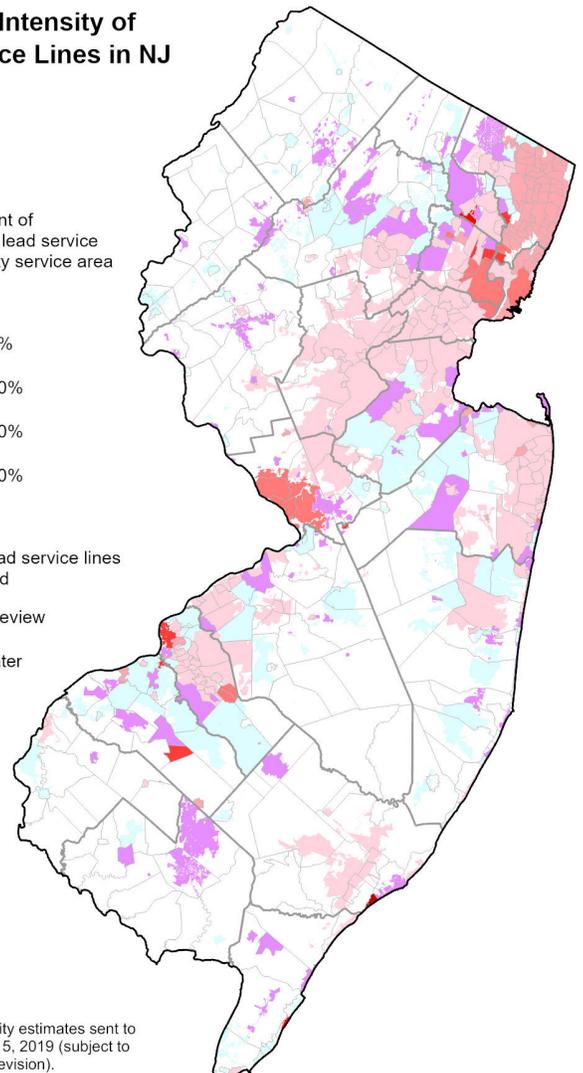
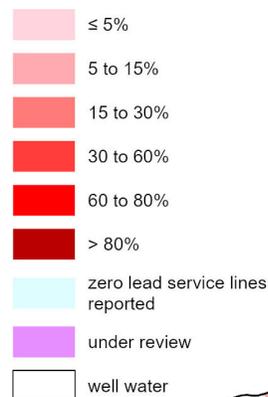
Because young children are particularly vulnerable to the pernicious effects of lead, exposure in child care facilities and schools is a serious concern. This is particularly true of children who are fed with formula mixed with lead-tainted water. Since the effects of lead often last a lifetime, it is vitally important that these facilities provide high-quality water.

- 5.1 Coordinate and refine testing cycles. (regulation and/or legislation)
- 5.2 Publish electronic databases of lead test results. (policy)
- 5.3 Improve water safety at facilities run by family child care providers. (policy)
- 5.4 Require drinking water management plans. (regulation)
- 5.5 Research financial assistance to child care facilities. (budget and research)
- 5.6 Maximize the health impact of the \$100 million Securing Our Children's Future grant program. (policy)

For more information and detailed descriptions of each recommendation, view the entire report online at jerseywaterworks.org/LeadReport.

Estimated Intensity of Lead Service Lines in NJ

Estimated percent of households with lead service line in water utility service area



Based on water utility estimates sent to DEP as of August 15, 2019 (subject to significant update/revision).

Right: New Jersey's problem is statewide. As of August 2019, 104 water systems in rural, suburban, and urban areas reported having lead service lines for some portion of their customers. This number is expected to grow. In addition, many homes and apartments have internal pipes and/or fixtures containing lead.

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ABOUT JERSEY WATER WORKS

Jersey Water Works is a collaborative effort of many diverse organizations and individuals who embrace the common purpose of transforming New Jersey's inadequate water infrastructure by investing in sustainable, cost-effective solutions that provide communities with clean water and waterways; healthier, safer neighborhoods; local jobs; flood and climate resilience; and economic growth. Learn more and join the mission at jerseywaterworks.org.

Disclaimer: Participation by task force members does not necessarily constitute individual or organizational endorsement of every recommendation. The state and federal government representatives took part to help inform the discussions and ensure technical accuracy. Their participation does not constitute individual or organizational endorsement of every recommendation.

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