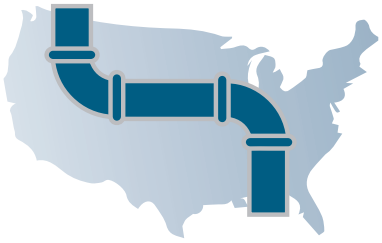
Lead Pipe Replacement

LEAD PIPES IN USE TODAY IN AMERICA



9.2 million

lead service lines remain in use in U.S. cities and should be replaced.

Source: EPA

OLDER SCHOOLS & FACILITIES STILL USE LEAD PIPES

400,000 U.S. schools and child-care facilities are at risk of having lead pipes in their facilities.

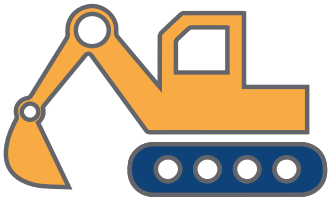
Source: White House "Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan"

100% LEAD PIPE REPLACEMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED

$45 billion

is needed to replace **100%** of dangerous lead service lines in the U.S.

Source: The White House



Issue background:

It is estimated that there are between 6 million to 10 million lead service lines in the United States. Much of the drinking water infrastructure in older U.S. cities was built before 1950, before researchers fully understood the toxicity of lead.

EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) agree that there is no known safe level of lead in drinking water. Lead is harmful to human health, especially for children.

Lead can enter drinking water when plumbing materials that contain lead corrode, especially where the water has high acidity or low mineral content that corrodes pipes and fixtures. In homes with lead pipes that connect the home to the water main, also known as lead services lines, these pipes are typically the most significant source of lead in the water.

The $1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed into law last November allocated $15 billion for lead pipe remediation. However, while this funding is a good start, industry experts and environmental advocates estimate the actual cost of fully replacing all lead pipes in the U.S. could be $60 billion.

What is NUCA's position?

Lead service lines were banned nationwide in 1986, but fixing this largely underground problem has been taking longer than community and environmental advocates would like. Chicago, Illinois, has the most lead pipe in use of any U.S. city, with an estimated 400,000 lines.

EPA and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) encourage and support communities to prioritize infrastructure improvement projects including those that remove lead service lines and reduce lead exposure. While lead-contaminated water can affect all populations, low-income and minority communities are hit the hardest.

Federal funding for lead pipe replacement is available through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF), the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN) Grants, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), and the HUD Development Community Block Grant program.

In late 2021, the Biden Administration outlined a plan to replace all of the nation's lead water pipes in the next decade. Its "Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan" will use the $15 billion in the IIJA as a significant down-payment on fulfilling this goal. The proposal included a request for a further $45 billion to eliminate all lead pipes and service lines nationwide.

Getting lead-pipe replacement funding to local water systems will be time-consuming because the EPA and local governments have yet to locate all the pipes. In most affected areas, officials have only a rough idea of where to find a city's lead service lines. There are ways to statistically model the likelihood that a given portion of the water system has lead service lines, using information such as water main sizes, locations and construction dates, but they are imperfect. There is also an administrative learning curve for the necessary federal requirements for distributing the money to communities.

Local water systems are responsible for the actual process to replace the pipes. These local authorities find the lead pipes, design projects to replace them, and then apply for federal funding through their states. States will have to develop their own lead pipe replacement programs.

What can Congress do to help?

Additional investments are needed from the federal government and state authorities to address this health hazard in a timely fashion. Prioritization for schools and for communities like Flint, Michigan, Newark, N.J., and Washington, D.C., and other older U.S. cities should also be adopted.

Replacing all lead service lines in America will be costly. Public resources used for other infrastructure projects could be diverted to lead pipe replacement if Congress finds private resources to replace these funds. Please see NUCA's fact sheet, "Private Activity Bonds" for more information about these untapped national economic resources available for infrastructure projects.

While legislation specifically addressing lead pipe replacement has not been introduced this Congress, previous Congresses did seek to find more revenue sources for lead pipe replacement. One example is:

NUCA supports the water and sewage facilities bond exemptions found in S. 3558 (115th Congress) and H.R. 4237 (113th Congress). Exempting these facilities from existing private activity bond caps would open up more resources that can be used to replace more lead pipes.

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