

City of Elgin Announces Elevated Levels of Lead in Drinking Water in Some Homes with Lead Water Service Lines or Lead Plumbing

Elgin - Recent drinking water quality monitoring conducted by the city of Elgin found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes and buildings in Elgin. The source of this lead is likely lead service lines leading from the city's municipal water pipes to homes of Elgin residents. Lead is not present in Elgin's source water (wells and river water), nor is lead in Elgin's treated drinking water. Some homes and buildings, however, have water service lines, solder or fixtures made of lead, and lead can enter the drinking water through the corrosion of plumbing materials.

The results from the drinking water monitoring are representative of the homes and buildings most at-risk for lead in water – those built or plumbed before 1988. Lead can enter the drinking water through the corrosion of plumbing materials.

Twice a year, Elgin tests 100 homes and buildings that are expected to have lead present in their plumbing due to the presence of lead services lines. The EPA action level for lead is exceeded when more than 10 percent of these homes have lead-in-water levels above 15 parts per billion. In the first half of 2025, the city completed the routine sampling and of the 100 homes sampled, 48 were found to have lead levels above the action level.

The city's routine water quality sampling under federal and state regulations requires the drinking water from 100 homes to be analyzed every six months. When results are above regulation limits, the city is required to notify the public and implement corrective action. The first set of test results from this year indicate forty-eight homes are above the regulatory limit of 15 ppb, showing 43 ppb as the 90th percentile value from the set of homes sampled.

The previous water sampling protocol required what is commonly called a "first draw." This sample tested water that had been stagnant in a home's interior plumbing. Interior

plumbing is typically not made of lead, but rather materials that contain a small percentage of lead, for example copper pipes with lead solder or brass fittings. The new testing protocol requires that the sample be a “fifth liter” sample. This sample is representative of water that has been stagnant in the home’s “lead service line,” the underground line leading from the home’s exterior wall to the water main in the street. By sampling the water that has been sitting in contact with the service line that is constructed of lead, it is expected that the lead levels will be higher. This is why it is recommended that homes with lead service lines flush their water for at least five minutes prior to consumption, in order to flush out the water that has been sitting stagnant in the lead service line.

During the past ten years, Elgin has been replacing the publicly owned portion of a lead water service line (water main to shut-off valve) during capital improvement projects and when residents commit to replacing their privately-owned portion of the lead service line (shut-off valve to home or building). Over the past four years, the city has been assisting residents in replacing their private portion of the lead water service line when disturbed by city activity. Additionally, as a part of the City’s Lead Service Line Replacement program the City has been replacing the entire service line, from the water main to the meter, in select neighborhoods around the City. These initiatives have replaced approximately 2,790 lead service lines since 2018, with approximately 890 service lines replaced in 2024. Approximately 1,000 lead service lines are budgeted for replacement in 2025 with similar plans contemplated for future years.

Exposure to lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources, especially for pregnant women and children 6 years or younger. Lead can cause damage to the brain and kidneys and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother’s bones, which may affect brain development.

What the city is doing

Elgin is taking the following actions to protect and educate the public:

- The city is making a multi-year, \$150 million commitment to replace every lead service line in the city at no cost to the homeowner. The city is removing almost 1,000 lead service lines annually at a cost of approximately \$15,000 per household or business.
- Providing an interactive online dashboard enabling the public to view the city's lead service line replacement actions. This online dashboard shows real time progress of water service line replacements and offers a lookup of lead service lines by address. For more information visit elginIL.gov/lead.
- Offering free testing and water filters to residents living in homes built in 1988 or earlier.
- Increasing education and outreach to Elgin's water customers through emails and mailings.
- Proactively partnering with local health departments to protect the public from exposure to lead through testing, education and outreach.
- Actively managing drinking water from the water treatment plants and in the water distribution system to maintain the effectiveness of the city's corrosion control treatment.
- Improving the corrosion control treatment at the water treatment plants in order to enhance scaling on the inside of lead pipes.

What the public can do

There are easy steps you can take to reduce your exposure to lead in your water:

- **Look for alternative drinking water sources or treatment of water.** The city recommends using a water filter certified to NSF/ASNI standard 42 for particulate reduction in addition to NSF/ANSI 53 for removal of lead if your home contains lead plumbing, particularly for formula-fed infants and vulnerable populations. Visit elginIL.gov/lead to receive information on the city's **free** water filter program and filter education materials.
- **Run your drinking water faucet to flush out lead.** When your drinking water faucets have not been used for several hours, run the water for at least five minutes before using it for drinking or cooking. This will flush any lead that may be present in the interior plumbing.
- **Use cold water for cooking.**
- **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- **Test your water for lead.** The best way to determine if your water has levels of lead is to get it tested. Visit elginIL.gov/lead to receive information on how to get your water tested for lead, including information on the city's free lead testing program.
- **Get your child's blood tested.** Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure.
- **Identify and replace plumbing fixtures containing lead.**

- **Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water,** especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

You can also find out if your home may have a lead service line.

Visit elginIL.gov/lead to use the city's lead service line material dashboard and search by address.

Call the city at 311 (or 847-931-6001 if outside of Elgin) or visit our website at ElginIL.gov/lead to find out how to get your water tested for lead or for more information on steps the city is taking to address the lead action level exceedance.

For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit the EPA's website at www.epa.gov/lead or contact your healthcare provider.

For more information visit elginIL.gov/lead.

Stay informed - sign up to keep receiving updates about City of Elgin water by [clicking here](#).