

EPA's Revised Lead and Copper Rule: Developing and Maintaining a Service Line Inventory

Information About the Updated Lead and Copper Rule

On December 16, 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced steps to strengthen the regulations on lead in drinking water.

On August 4, 2022, the EPA released guidance to help communities identify pipes connecting drinking water to homes and other buildings containing lead. Under this guidance, San Jacinto Special Utility District (SJSUD) will develop an inventory of over 1,400 service lines. This inventory will be available to the public.

The goal of the rule revision is to replace all lead service lines. An accurate inventory will help the Utility continue replacing lead service lines as they are located.

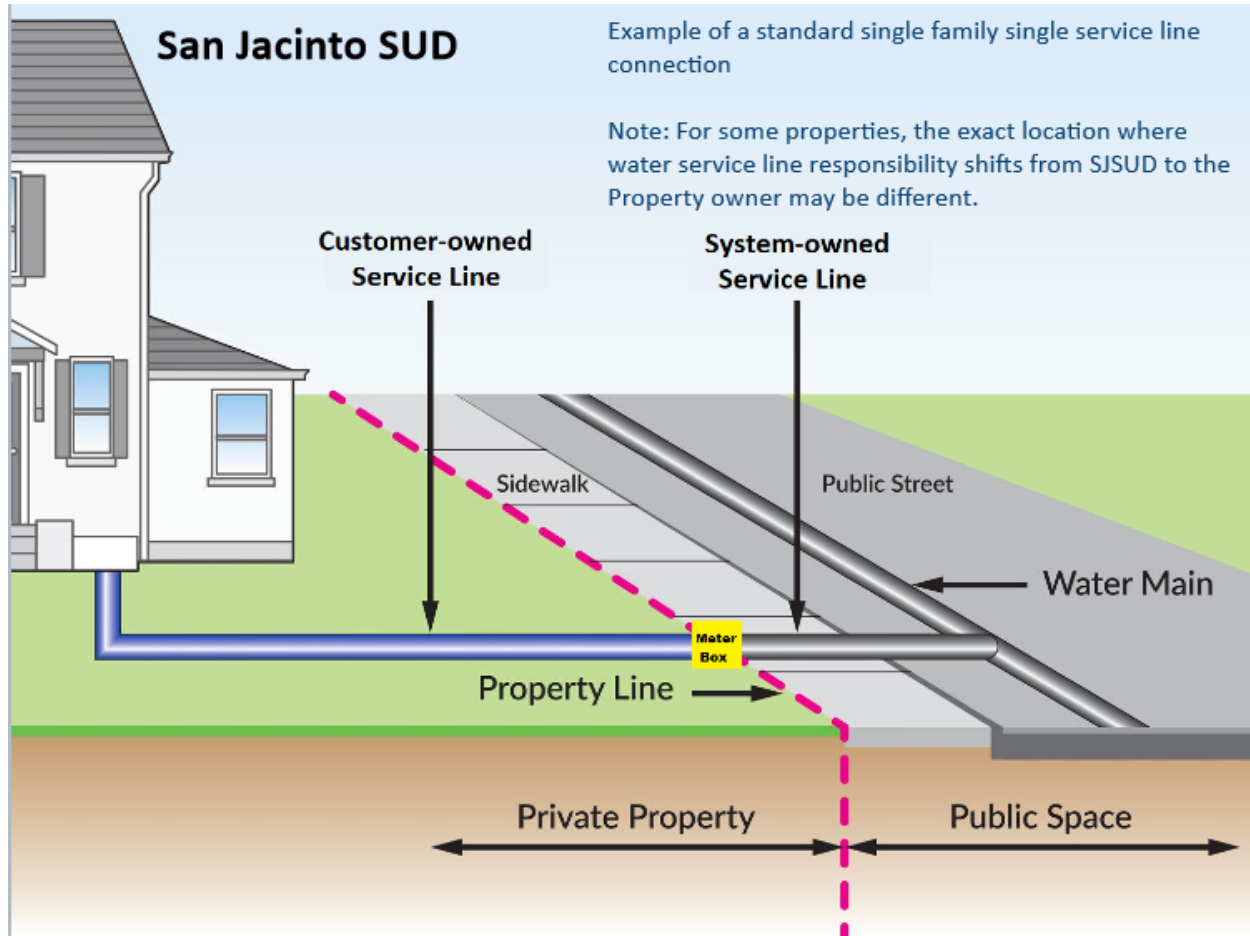
Rules and guidelines continue to be updated by the EPA and cooperating agencies, and the Utility will stay apprised of changes to maintain our high water quality level.

We Take Pride in Providing Safe, Clean Drinking Water

In January 2023, SJSUD began surveying water service lines in our service territory to inventory and determine the pipe materials used to connect SJSUD's water distribution system to residences or businesses. Although highly unlikely, this process will help determine if any lead service lines still exist on the customer-facing side of residences. Water service lines made of lead can affect drinking water quality and cause [serious health effects](#).

This new program is in response to the Environmental Protection Agency's [2021 Lead and Copper Rule Revisions](#), which require water suppliers to inventory all service lines within their service area. All service lines within

the district will be surveyed. The timeline that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency have given water systems to complete this inventory is October 16, 2024.



There is No Action Required on Your Part

If it is determined that your **service lines** have lead or copper, they will be identified by professionally trained SJSUD employees, and you will be notified once our system inventory is complete and submitted to the regulatory agencies. **There is no action needed.**

What to Expect When Your Water Lines Are Inspected?

- When inventorying a water service line, SJSUD employees will examine both the customer line connected to the water meter and SJSUD's service line located on the other side of the meter. Water meters are located in the water meter box, which is typically in the front or side yard between the street.
- To accurately survey the water service line material, SJSUD will check the material from the meter box to the entry point of the customer's home. In some instances, a hole will be excavated to determine the type of material used to connect to the water meter. Once the material has been inventoried, the hole will be backfilled immediately.
- As part of the inventory, SJSUD will take photographs of the materials used and upload them into the inventory file.
- Inspections will be done during regular business hours, after hours on weekdays during the daylight hours, and on weekends. The inspection will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that is harmful if inhaled or swallowed. Lead can be found in air, soil, dust, pottery, food, and water.

What is a water service line?

A water service line (or lateral) consists of two separate pipes. One connects SJSUD's water main to the customer's water meter. The other part connects the water meter to the customer's house or building.

San Jacinto Special Utility District is responsible for the water service from the main to the meter. The property owner is responsible for the water service line from the water meter to the building, including all the service lines inside the building.

What does it matter if I have a lead service line?

Before being prohibited by the State of Texas on July 1, 1988, lead was an acceptable material for use in water line systems. Over time, it was discovered that the use of lead in drinking water service pipes can lead to [adverse health effects](#).

How can lead get into my drinking water?

Lead is rarely found naturally in our source water or the treated water flowing through the SJSUD distribution system. More commonly, traces of lead can leach into water over time through corrosion—a dissolving or wearing away of metal caused by a chemical reaction between water and your plumbing.

Lead can leach into water from pipes, solder, fixtures, faucets (brass), and fittings. The amount of lead in your water depends on the types and amounts of minerals in the water, how long the water stays in the pipes, the water's corrosivity, and water temperature.

Do I need to check what type of water service lines I have?

No. San Jacinto Special Utility District employees will survey all service lines within the district's service area. No action is needed on your part.

Is my home at risk for lead plumbing?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines high-risk homes as follows:

- Homes with a lead service line that connects the water main to your home's internal plumbing;
- Homes with copper pipe and lead solder built before 1988; and
- Homes with lead pipes.

Older brass fixtures, such as faucets, valves, and fittings, also may contain lead.

In 1986, Congress enacted the "lead ban," which stated that public water systems and anyone else who intends to install or repair drinking water plumbing connected to a public water system must use "lead-free materials." As a result, homes built in or after 1988 are far less likely to have lead solder.

What will happen if SJSUD finds lead in the water service lines at my home?

If lead materials are identified, they will be inventoried, and you will be notified once the inventory for the entire system is complete and submitted to the regulatory agencies.

If lead is found and I don't replace my pipes, will SJSUD shut off my water?

No. There will never be any service disconnections as a result of this program.

Will SJSUD replace my lead service line?

No. Lead service lines on a customer's property are not part of the public water system and are the property owner's responsibility. The utility owns the meter and the service

line running from the water main to the meter. The private ownership begins with the line exiting the meter.

I have lead lines, but I can't afford to replace them. What do I do?

San Jacinto Special Utility District is developing the replacement plan, which must be submitted to TCEQ for approval by October 2024. One of the plan's requirements is to put a strategy in place for those who cannot afford a replacement.

Once the service line replacement plan is finalized and submitted, the specifics on how and when pipes will be replaced will be shared with customers. The details are not confirmed at this time.

How can I reduce my exposure to lead from drinking water?

You can take steps right away to reduce the possibility of lead in your water, but if you have lead water lines, the best solution is to have them replaced.

- **Run the Tap Before Use** – Lead levels are likely highest when water sits in the pipe for several hours. Clear this water from your pipes by running the cold water for several minutes, which allows you to draw fresh water from the water main. Please remember to be water-wise and try not to waste water. You can use this water on house plants or to flush toilets.
- **Clean Aerators** – Aerators are small attachments at the tips of faucets that regulate water flow. They can collect small particles of lead in their screens. It's a good idea to remove your aerators at least monthly and clean them out.
- **Use Cold Water for Drinking and Cooking** – Always cook and prepare baby formula with cold water because hot water dissolves lead more quickly, resulting in higher levels in water.
- **Change Out Old Fixtures** – Plumbing regulations now stipulate that all fixtures must be manufactured lead-free. Consider installing new fixtures and/or pipes to eliminate sources of exposure.
- **Filter the Water** – Many home water filters are effective at removing lead. If you purchase a filter, make sure it is certified for lead removal and that you maintain it properly.
- **Do Not Boil Water** – Boiling water will not remove lead from the water.