

Service Line Stewardship Program



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Howard County's Service Line Stewardship Program?

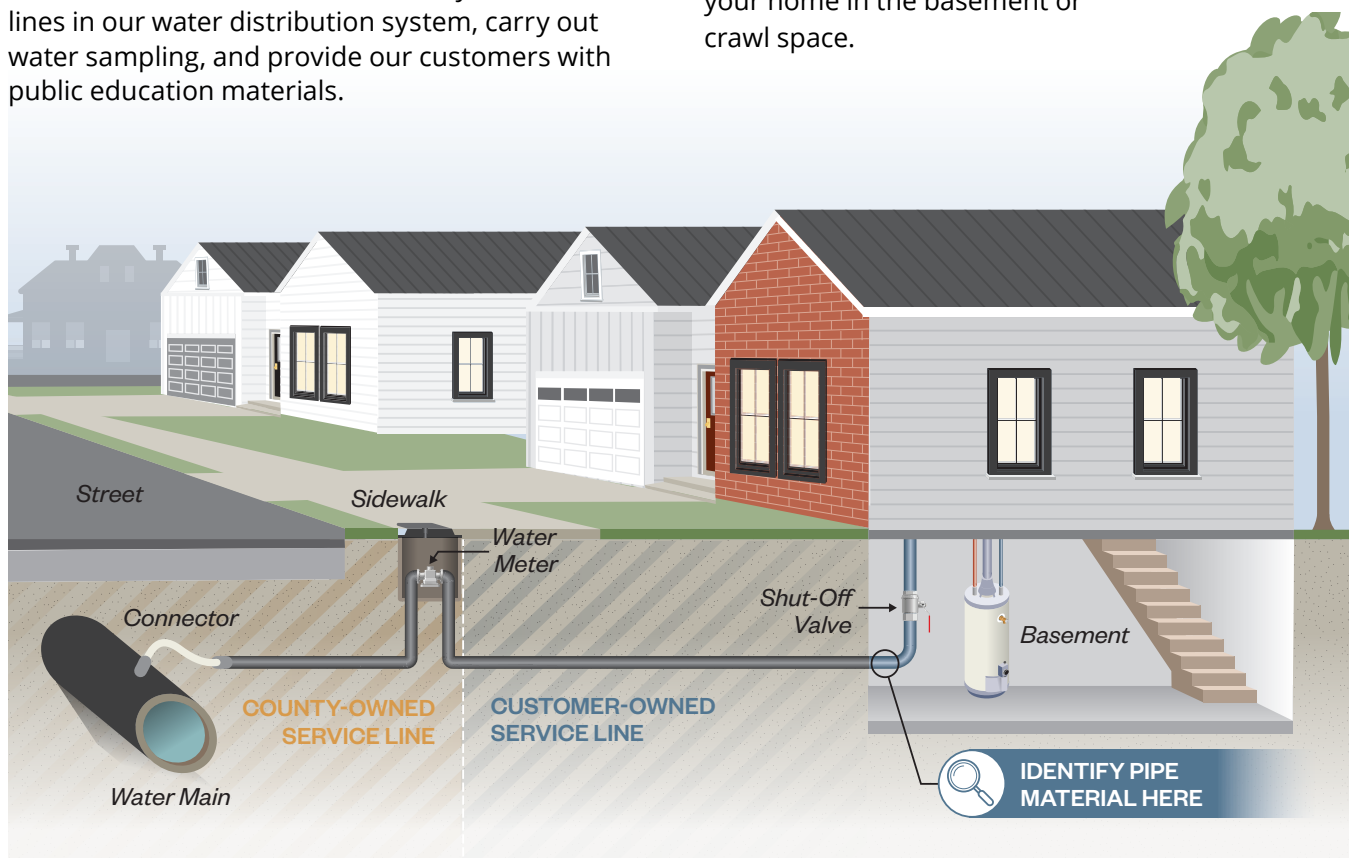
The Service Line Stewardship Program aims to proactively comply with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Lead and Copper Rule Revisions, which were issued in 2021. Part of the revised rule is to submit an inventory of the service lines in our water distribution system, carry out water sampling, and provide our customers with public education materials.

What is a water service line?

A service line is the underground pipe that connects your home to the water main.

Where can I locate my service line?

It can typically be seen where it enters your home in the basement or crawl space.



Do the revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule mean I have lead pipes?

No. A primary purpose of the revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule is simply to identify the material of all water service lines to enhance customer awareness. Identifying out-of-date materials, including lead, is the first step toward eliminating them from the distribution system.

Will this program affect my water bill?

No. The program does not impact the cost of water.

Where can I find more information regarding the Service Line Stewardship Program?

All information can be found on the program webpage at www.howardcountymd.gov/public-works/service-line-stewardship-program.



Service Line Stewardship Program



Water Quality

How does lead get into drinking water?

Lead is seldom found as a natural contaminant in drinking water and generally originates from lead-based plumbing materials. Lead can enter drinking water when plumbing materials containing lead corrode over time. These materials include pipes made of lead, lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, and brass and chrome-plated brass faucets. Lead service lines are typically the most significant source of lead in the water. In Maryland, these materials are more likely to be found in homes built before 1972.

Do all lead service lines contaminate drinking water?

Not necessarily. All lead service lines have the potential to leach lead into drinking water, but the water chemistry in the distribution system is carefully managed at treatment facilities to prevent this from happening. Lead occurs in drinking water through leaching from lead-containing pipe, faucets, and solder sometimes found in the plumbing of older constructions.

If a service line constructed with lead is identified on my property and then replaced, how can you ensure there is no longer lead in my water?

Howard County will assist in flushing the line following replacement and can provide follow-up sampling to ensure there is no longer lead coming from the service line serving the home.

If there are lead-based materials in my service line or premise plumbing, what steps can I take to reduce lead exposure?

Please refer to "Tips for Reducing Lead Exposure" in the Resources section of the webpage:
www.howardcountymd.gov/public-works/service-line-stewardship-program

Why is it necessary for me to self-report the material of my service line?

The portion of the service line that distributes water into your home was not installed by the County, so there is limited information about the material used. The Lead and Copper Rule Revisions require an inventory of the entire service line, including the portion owned by the customer. By validating the material of your service line, you are helping to comply with the regulation as well as identifying any outdated service line materials.

Are all residential, commercial, and industrial property owners being asked to complete the survey?

No. Only properties with a service line listed as being made from an unknown material are being asked to complete the survey.

What will Howard County do with the survey results?

Validated service line material information will be added to the inventory submitted to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). Service lines constructed using outdated materials will be flagged for replacement.

What happens if I determine I have a lead service line?

Do not be alarmed. If you determine you have a lead service line, notify Howard County by completing the survey. Although lead service lines have the potential to leach lead into drinking water, the water chemistry in the Howard County distribution system is carefully managed to prevent this from happening. This means that lead may not necessarily be in the drinking water even if the service line is made from lead.

If I'm on a private well, does this program affect me?

No. The LCRR does not apply to water service lines on properties served by private wells. If you are concerned about lead in your drinking water, please refer to the guidance on the EPA website:
www.epa.gov/privatewells.

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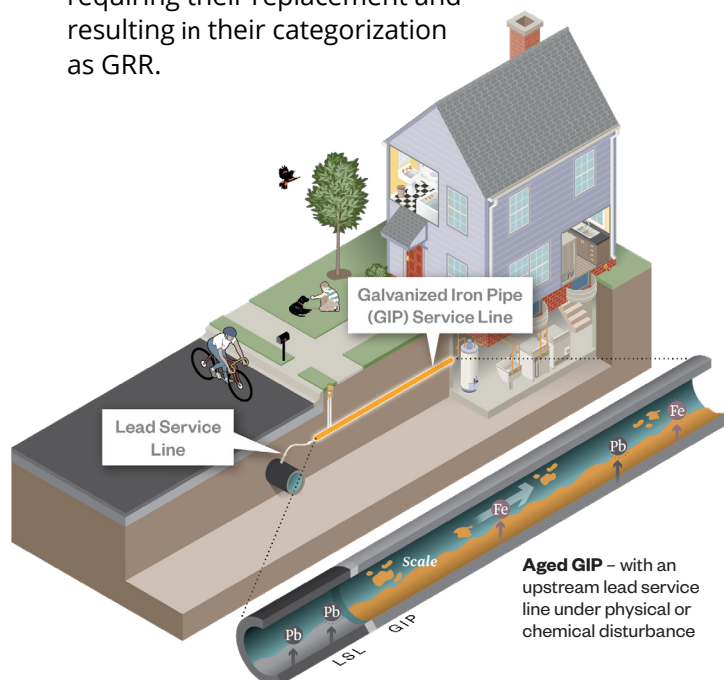
Will my water service line need to be replaced?

Replacement is only necessary if one of the following conditions is met:

- The service line was constructed with lead
- The service line is galvanized and downstream of a service line with unknown material – also known as galvanized requiring replacement (GRR)
- If the service line is galvanized and is either currently, or was previously, downstream of a lead service line, or GRR

What is a galvanized service line?

Galvanized pipes are iron pipes that have been dipped in a protective zinc coating to prevent corrosion and rust and were used as an alternative to lead pipe for service lines. Galvanized pipes can capture lead released from upstream lead service lines, which can be released into the home, requiring their replacement and resulting in their categorization as GRR.



Do all galvanized water service lines need to be replaced?

No. Only galvanized service lines that are currently or were potentially previously downstream of a lead service line will need to be replaced.

Will I have to pay out of pocket or hire a plumber to replace my service line?

We are actively assessing the potential cost implications of complying with LCRR as well as the potential contractors and plumbers that may be needed for replacements. The results of this assessment will be included in a service line replacement plan that will be shared with our customers upon completion.

Will my water service be interrupted should my water service line require replacement?

Replacement of water service lines will require a temporary interruption of water service to remove the existing service line, install the new service line, and connect to the new service line. This interruption will be kept to as short a duration as possible and will be no longer than eight hours.

How long will it take to replace the water service line? What materials will be used?

Water line replacements typically take between one to four hours to complete. Materials approved by the County will be used to replace the service line.

Will my property be disturbed? Who is responsible for restoration?

Water line replacements often do result in property disturbance. However, this is kept to a minimum. The contractor and/or plumber will be required to restore the property back to pre-construction condition for private side replacement. The County is responsible for the public side property restoration at no cost to the customer.