FACTS & FAQS

FACTS

As we have reported to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, our water quality testing program has found elevated levels of lead in the drinking water in a limited number of homes in Bergen and Hudson counties.

The water leaving our plant has no detectable level of lead. In addition, we have no lead water mains. Lead can enter the drinking water from the service lines – pipes that extend from the water mains in the street to individual homes and businesses, and from lead plumbing, solder and fixtures in customer homes.

Water quality is so important to us that we perform nearly 50,000 tests each year in this system alone. One part of our rigorous testing program is to test for lead in the water, and when we do, we test homes known to be served by lead service lines. All of the 108 homes we recently tested had lead service lines and the results showed lead levels above the government standard in 15 of those homes.

Less than 5 percent of the utility-owned service lines in our system – we own the pipe from the main to the property line — contain lead. An additional 12 percent of our system has lead goosenecks – a short piece of flexible piping that connects a water main to a service line.

TAKING ACTION

To control lead from leaching into the water, SUEZ has had a corrosion control treatment program in place for decades. Essentially, this coats the pipes to prevent lead from entering the water supply. We continue to rigorously monitor our system and will test for the next 12 months to make sure that our corrosion control treatment is working exactly as it should.

In addition to corrosion control, every time SUEZ has done work in the ground and found lead, it was removed. SUEZ is now expanding that program to more specifically target lead service line replacements. The ultimate goal is to remove all lead in the system.

STEPS SUEZ IS TAKING FOR CUSTOMERS

- Customers who are served or may be served by a utility-owned lead service line or gooseneck can request a test of their drinking water by calling our customer service center at 800-422-5987
- If a test result is above the government's standard, we will provide a water pitcher with a filter that removes lead from drinking water
- We have established a new water quality website – www.SUEZWQ.com -- that provides further details about lead in the drinking water
- For more information or to determine if you are served by a utility-owned lead service line: Check your online account, visit www.SUEZWQ.com or www.mysuezwater.com/njwq, email us at sueznjcustserv@suez-na.com or call our customer service center at 800-422-5987

FAQs

Q: Is my water safe to drink?
SUEZ takes the safety of the drinking water seriously. The water leaving the treatment plant has no detectable level of lead. SUEZ rigorously monitors the water – conducting nearly 50,000 tests a year. This is an issue with the service lines and interior plumbing of homes. If customers are among the less than 5 percent in the system served by a utility-owned lead service line, the 12 percent with lead goosenecks, or there are lead fixtures in the home, there is the possibility that lead could enter the drinking water. Even so, it is not certain lead will be found in the water – remember that SUEZ tested 108 homes with lead lines and 15 of those were above the safety standard. That is why SUEZ is providing testing for customers with lead lines.

Q: To whom does this notice apply?
This applies to our customers in Bergen and Hudson counties.
The notice **does not** apply to Franklin Lakes, Allendale or Saddle River. It also does not apply to residents in municipalities that contract with SUEZ to operate their water systems. This includes Jersey City, Bayonne, Hoboken, Rahway, Kearny and Orange.

Q: What are the health effects of lead?
The U.S. Centers for Disease Control suggests that long-term exposure to lead in water is a concern for infants, young children and pregnant women. Lead can cause serious health issues because it can lead to neurological and kidney damage and interfere with the body's production of red blood cells. Risk will vary, however, depending on the individual, the circumstances, and the amount of water consumed. For more information, consult a health professional.

Q: What can I do to lessen my exposure to lead if it is present?
Before using any tap water for drinking or cooking, flush your water system by running the kitchen tap (or any other tap you take drinking or cooking water from) on COLD for 1–2 minutes. Never use hot water from the faucet for drinking or cooking, especially when making baby formula or food for infants. Routinely clean faucet screens (also called aerators) at the tip of your faucet. Sediment and metals can collect in faucet screens. More information is available on SUEZWQ.

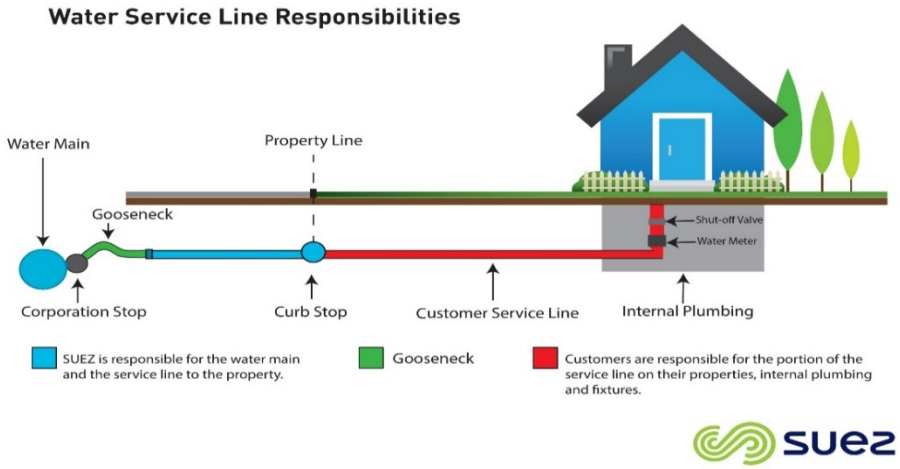
Q: If my water is found to have high lead levels, is it safe to take a bath or shower?
Yes. As per the Centers for Disease Control, bathing and showering should be safe for you and your children, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water.

Q: How does lead get into the drinking water?
The water leaving our plant has no detectable level of lead. In addition, we have no lead water mains.

Lead can enter drinking water from service lines made of lead, lead goosenecks, and from lead pipes, solder and fixtures inside homes. Service lines are pipes that extend from water mains to individual residences or businesses.

Other indoor plumbing pipes and fixtures may contain lead that could enter your drinking water, including lead solder that connects pipes in your home as well as brass faucets. Homes or buildings built prior to 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder. Lead service lines are typically only present in older homes, but older brass faucets with lead content can be found in newer homes.

Q: Who owns the service line?
SUEZ owns the portion of the service line that runs from the water main to the homeowner's property line, while the customer owns the remaining portion that extends from the property line into the home or business.



Q: How do I know if my home has a lead service line or fixtures?
To find out if the SUEZ portion of the service pipe or gooseneck has lead, customers can check their online account, visit www.SUEZWQ.com or www.mysuezwater.com/njwq, or call or email our customer service center at 800-422-5987 and sueznjcustserv@suez-na.com. SUEZ customer service representatives are available to answer questions, including those about lead lines and testing.

Customers still need to determine the material used in their portion of the line. To determine if a home's service line is made of lead, customers (or your plumber) need to inspect the line. Lead service lines are generally a dull gray color and are very soft. You can identify them easily by carefully scratching with a flat-tipped screwdriver. If the pipe is made of lead, scratched area will turn a bright silver color. Do not use a knife or other sharp instrument and take care not to puncture a hole in the pipe. A video that demonstrates how to conduct a scratch test is available at www.SUEZWQ.com. A qualified plumber can also determine if the home contains lead-based plumbing fixtures.

SUEZ recommends that customers who have lead service lines on their properties hire a licensed contractor to replace the line. If replacing pipes and household plumbing is not an option, many water filters are effective in removing lead. Be sure to check the label or contact the manufacturer to confirm the filter is certified for lead removal. More information about how to reduce exposure can be found at SUEZWQ.

Q: Should I have my children tested for lead in their blood?
If you are concerned about lead exposure, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection recommends contacting your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get tested for lead. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects.

Q. How do I get my water tested if my address is not on the list of utility-owned lead lines?
Customers who may be concerned can contact a laboratory that will perform a test. The following labs are among those listed on the DEP's water quality website:
AGRA Environmental and Laboratory Services -- 973-989-0010
APL (Aqua Pro-Tech Laboratories) -- 973-227-0422
EMSL -- 856-303-2546
Eurofins Eaton Analytical -- 800-332-4345
Garden State Laboratories -- 908-688-8900