



FACT SHEET

Lead

What is Lead and How Is It Used?

Lead is a metal found in natural deposits as ores containing other elements. It is sometimes used in household plumbing materials or in water service lines used to bring water from the main to the home.

Why is Lead being Regulated?

In 1974 Congress passed the Safe Drinking Water Act. This law required EPA to determine safe levels of chemicals in drinking water which do or may cause health problems. These non-enforceable levels, based solely on possible health risks and exposure, are called Maximum Contaminant Level Goals.

The MCLG for lead has been set at zero because EPA believes this level of protection would not cause any of the potential health problems described below.

Since lead contamination generally occurs from corrosion of household lead pipes, it cannot be directly detected or removed by the water system. Instead, EPA requires water systems to control the corrosiveness of their water if the level of lead at home taps exceeds an Action Level.

The action level for lead has been set at 15 parts per billion (ppb) because EPA believes, given current technology, this is the lowest level to which water systems can reasonably be required to control this contaminant should it be present at the customer home taps.

These standards are called the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations, and all public water supplies must abide by these regulations.

What Are The Long-Term Health Effects?

Short and long-term health effects: Lead can cause a variety of adverse health effects when people are exposed to it at levels above the action level for relatively short periods of time. The long-term health effects include the potential to cause stroke and kidney disease as well as cancer.

How Will Lead Be Detected and Removed From My Drinking Water?

The regulation for lead became effective in 1992. Between 1993 and 1995, EPA required water suppliers to collect water samples from household taps twice a year and analyze them to find out if lead was present above 15 ppb in more than 10 percent of all homes tested. If it was present above this level, the system continued to monitor twice a year.

If lead levels were found to be consistently above the action level, the water supplier was mandated to take steps to reduce the amount of lead so that it was consistently below the action level.

Corrosion Control Treatment

The City of Rockford minimizes corrosion (release of lead/copper) in our distribution system by using water treatment chemicals that are food grade polyphosphates. This treatment coats the inside of the plumbing and provides a barrier inhibiting these chemicals from being released into drinking water.

The drinking water is monitored every three years as mandated by the IEPA to ensure that there is no lead or copper above the action levels present.