TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Hillsborough Keeping Lead out of Water System

The Town of Hillsborough has a long history of working to prevent water customers' exposure to lead.

The town has no lead pipes in its distribution system, but some buildings may have lead supply lines connecting them to the town's distribution system. Others may have copper plumbing with lead-based solder. Because lead supply lines generally were not used after 1930, the town does not have reliable data on how many — if any — are connected to its system. However, copper plumbing installed between 1983 and 1987 is likely to contain lead-based solder.

The only way to know for certain if a building's pipes are made of lead is to examine them, which requires digging up the supply line and checking the plumbing in a basement or crawlspace. Although these pipes are not owned by the town, the town takes its responsibility to provide safe water seriously, and adds a blended phosphate corrosion inhibitor to its water. This additive greatly reduces the risk of pipes leaching lead and copper into the water.

Use of lead-based solder was a major reason the federal Environmental Protection Agency instituted its Lead and Copper Rule in 1991. Compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule requires that the town periodically check the amount of lead and copper in customers' water after it has passed through the service line and the building's plumbing. The rule has been revised several times in the intervening years, and the town has remained fully compliant since the beginning.

The town primarily conducts its tests in houses built during the years lead-based solder was in use. The town takes 30 samples every three years, with the next sampling scheduled for later this year. The amount of sampling done by the town has been reduced by the EPA due to Hillsborough's long history of compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule.

Although the corrosion inhibitor greatly reduces the risk, customers who suspect they have lead pipes or copper pipes with lead-based solder also are encouraged to take the following precautions to limit exposure:

- Flush out lines after a period of stagnation. (Consider using the water to flush toilets or water plants in order to minimize waste.)
- Purchase a filtering or treatment device certified to remove lead, and make sure the device is properly installed and maintained.
- Avoid drinking or cooking with water from the hot water tap, where lead is more likely to be present.