

Hillsborough Keeping Lead out of Water System

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

Lead sources

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 whether any are connected to its system. However, copper plumbing installed between 1982 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.

Precautions the town takes

Although a building's supply lines and plumbing 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.

The town also performs periodic testing of customers' water. Use of lead-based solder was a major reason the federal Environmental Protection Agency instituted the Lead and Copper Rule in 1991. Compliance with the rule requires that the town periodically check the amount of lead and copper in customers' water after the water 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. 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.

Precautions customers can take

Customers who suspect they have lead pipes or copper pipes with lead-based solder are encouraged to take the following additional precautions to limit exposure:

- Flush water lines after a period of stagnation. For guidance, see the Utilities Department section of the town's website. To minimize waste, consider using the released water to flush toilets or water plants.
- Purchase a filtering or treatment device certified to remove lead. Make sure it is properly installed and maintained. Note that a filter prevents the town from conducting bacteriological tests of a property's water lines should a water quality issue occur. This is because the water will have undergone secondary treatment, and test results would not provide data on the water Hillsborough delivers.
- Avoid drinking or cooking with water from the hot water tap, where lead is more likely to be present.

For information on the corrosion inhibitor, contact the Water Treatment Plant at 919-296-9640. For information on testing, supply lines and pipes, contact the Water Distribution Division at 919-296-9650.