



June 16, 2020

**SUBJECT: IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER**

Dear Rowan County Northeast Water System Customer,

At Rowan County and Salisbury-Rowan Utilities, our mission is to provide our customers with high quality water service, to promote public health and improve the quality of life. The main purpose of this letter is to alert you that **your water may contain lead and copper** and notify you of steps you can take to reduce lead exposure. The Northeast Rowan County Water System found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings; the source of this lead is customers' private service lines and/or internal plumbing. The Salisbury-Rowan Utilities public water system has met requirements for Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) compliance. LEAD CAN CAUSE SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND YOUNG CHILDREN.

Effective immediately we will be taking the following steps:

- STEP 1: Rowan County will offer free voluntary lead and copper testing to you. To receive a free test, please contact **Statesville Analytical** at **(980) 223-2901 and selection Option 2** to setup an appointment time that is convenient for you. Statesville Analytical sampling personnel will collect a sample at the kitchen faucet of your home. You will also be asked to provide information on the type of plumbing within your home, which will provide insight into interpreting the sample results.
- STEP 2: Rowan County and Salisbury-Rowan Utilities (SRU) will hold 2 community meetings to answer your questions on lead in drinking water. The meetings will be held virtually by Zoom conference call due to COVID-19.

**Meeting 1 - June 19, 2020 at 12pm**

Rowan County Manager's Office is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Rowan County discussion of lead and copper in your drinking water

Join Zoom Meeting (via computer or smartphone) <https://bit.ly/sru0619>

**Meeting ID:** 952 3050 4364 **Password:** 785450

Or dial by phone

+1 602 753 0140 US (Phoenix) +1 720 928 9299 US (Denver) +1 213 338 8477 US (Los Angeles)

**Meeting ID:** 952 3050 4364 **Password:** 785450

## **Meeting 2 - June 25, 2020 at 7pm**

Rowan County Manager's Office is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Rowan County discussion of lead and copper in your drinking water

Join Zoom Meeting (via computer or smartphone) <https://bit.ly/sru0625>

**Meeting ID:** 990 2303 5980 **Password:** 897204

Or dial by phone

+1 213 338 8477 US (Los Angeles) +1 602 753 0140 US (Phoenix) +1 720 928 9299 US (Denver)

**Meeting ID:** 990 2303 5980 **Password:** 897204

**STEP 3:** If your water contains lead or copper above the Action Level established by the USEPA, Rowan County will provide you a point-of-use filter that will serve as an interim measure to protect consumers from lead exposure in drinking water. Replacement cartridges will be provided to each consumer at the manufacturer's recommended interval until 90th percentile lead levels in the NEWS are below the Action Level.

## **PLEASE READ THIS LETTER CLOSELY TO SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER.**

**Health Effects of Lead:** *Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.*

**Sources of Lead:** *Lead is a common metal found in the environment. The main sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil, and some plumbing materials. In addition, lead can be found in certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics. Other sources include exposure in the work place and exposure from certain hobbies (lead can be carried on clothing or shoes). Drinking water is also a possible source of lead exposure. Most sources of drinking water have no lead or very low levels of lead. Most lead gets into drinking water after the water leaves the local well or treatment plant and comes into contact with household plumbing materials containing lead. These include lead pipes, and lead solder (commonly used until 1986), as well as faucets, valves, and other components made of brass. Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. EPA estimates that 10 to 20 percent of a person's potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water. Infants who consume mostly formula mixed with lead-containing water can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.*

## **Important Steps You Can Take to Reduce Lead in Drinking Water**

- *Have your water tested. Contact us to have your water tested and to learn more about the lead levels in your drinking water.*
- *Learn if you have a lead service line. Contact your water utility or a licensed plumber to determine if the pipe that connects your home to the water main (called a service line) is made from lead.*
- *Run your water. Before drinking, flush your home's pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. The amount of time to run the water will depend on whether your home has a lead service line or not, and the length of the lead service line. Allow the water to run for at least 3 to 4 minutes before using it for drinking or cooking. Contact us for more information about flushing times in your community.*
- *Learn about construction in your neighborhood. Be aware of any construction or maintenance work that could disturb your lead service line. Construction may cause more lead to be released from a lead service line.*
- *Use cold water. Use only cold water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula. Remember, boiling water does not remove lead from water.*
- *Clean your aerator. Regularly clean your faucet's screen (also known as an aerator). Sediment, debris, and lead particles can collect in your aerator. If lead particles are caught in the aerator, lead can get into your water.*
- *Use your filter properly. If you use a filter, make sure you use a filter certified to remove lead. Read the directions to learn how to properly install and use your cartridge and when to replace it. Using the cartridge after it has expired can make it less effective at removing lead. Do not run hot water through the filter.*

## **WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT IS BEING DONE?**

The Northeast Rowan County water system (NEWS) began distributing public water supply in July 2018 to customers who were previously supplied from private groundwater wells.

Rowan County owns the water system, and SRU serves as the Contract Operator and Operator in Responsible Charge (ORC). SRU operates a water treatment plant which supplies the City of Salisbury and NEWS. SRU provides corrosion control treatment by adding a corrosion inhibitor and adjusting the finished water pH. This treatment is designed to minimize the potential for lead contamination. **The SRU public water system has met requirements for Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) compliance.** The source of lead in drinking water at some homes in the NEWS is customers' private service lines and/or internal plumbing.

As part of establishing a new drinking water system, in October of 2018, SRU was required to test for the presence of lead and copper in Rowan County's NEWS; samples were taken by NEWS customers from their kitchen faucets.

The LCR requires NEWS to collect samples from ten (10) homes within the newly constructed water system; the homes that were selected for testing were chosen because of the year the homes were built. Based on the year built date, the homes selected may have copper plumbing with lead solder.

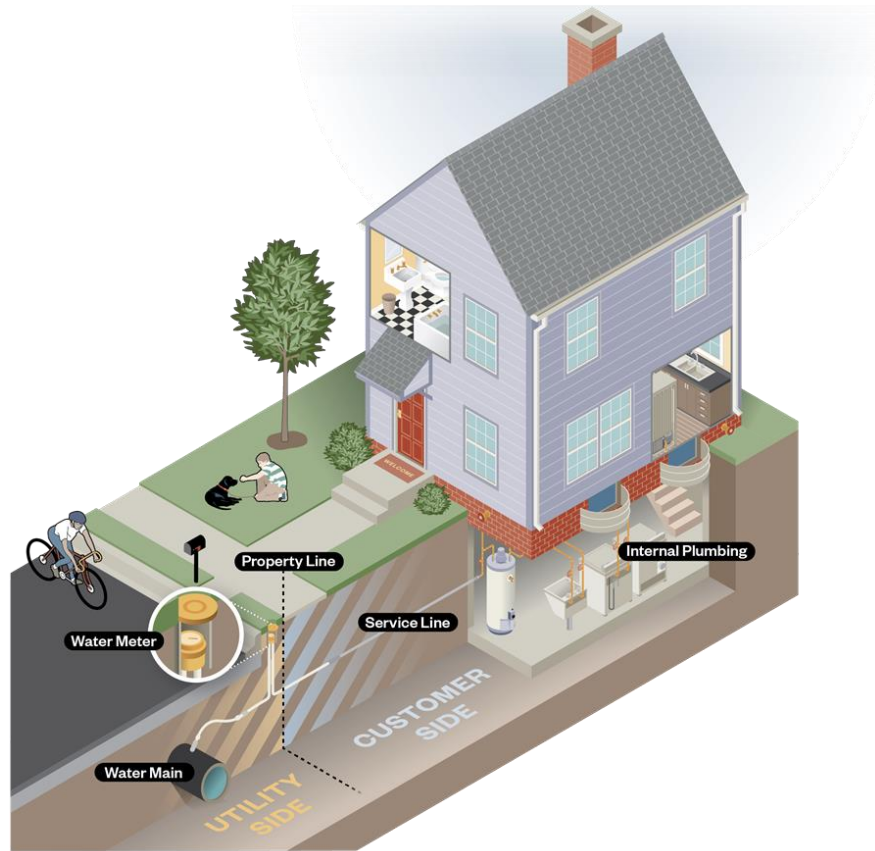
SRU's corrosion inhibitor takes time to effectively control corrosion of private/internal plumbing. In addition, the average usage of customers in the NEWS is approximately 2,000 gallons per month (about half of the statewide average). Water turnover in the lines improves the corrosion inhibitor's effectiveness. The flushing that SRU is conducting helps the main lines but not the private service lines and individual plumbing. The quality of the water to each customer's meter meets all standards; however, it will take some time for the corrosion inhibitor to reduce lead release from private plumbing.

The system's 90th percentile lead concentration has exceeded the Action Level during each 6-month monitoring period, including the most recent round of sampling conducted during the first half of 2020. Three of 10 sample sites had lead levels above the Action Level. Public Education and Special Notifications were mailed out to each NEWS customer following the October 2018, May 2019, August 2019, and February 2020 LCR sampling events. Consistent with the Lead and Copper Rule, SRU has maintained water quality in the distribution system at appropriate levels designated by the State.

SRU proposes to research and provide adjustments to the finished water pH and orthophosphate dose at its water treatment plant to further improve corrosion control.

In addition, due to the public health risks of elevated lead levels in drinking water, the County and SRU propose to provide certified point-of-use filters to consumers at the three (3) homes with lead levels above the Action Level in 2020 compliance tap sampling. In June 2020, free water testing for lead and copper will also be offered to any NEWS customer. In the event water tests for lead and copper exceed Action Levels, a water filter will be provided for their use until this matter is resolved. Point-of-use filters will serve as an interim measure to protect consumers from lead exposure in drinking water. Replacement cartridges will be provided to each consumer at the manufacturer's recommended interval until 90th percentile lead levels in the NEWS are below the Action Level.

The County and SRU will continue to investigate factors contributing to elevated lead levels in the NEWS through a combination of strategies such as distribution system water quality monitoring, sample site investigations, and investigative tap sampling (see figure on next page).



Information gained from these activities will guide the implementation of any additional strategies to further address elevated lead levels. However, these important activities require access within private residences by water system staff, which has been complicated due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic crisis. A hired consultant plans to perform these investigations as soon as homes can be safely accessed with homeowner permission. In addition, the County has issued a Request for Qualifications to retain an engineering firm to design a corrosion control booster pump station that may need to be constructed.

In the event that you have questions or would like additional information please don't hesitate to contact me at 704-638-5202.

Sincerely,

Jim Behmer, P.E.

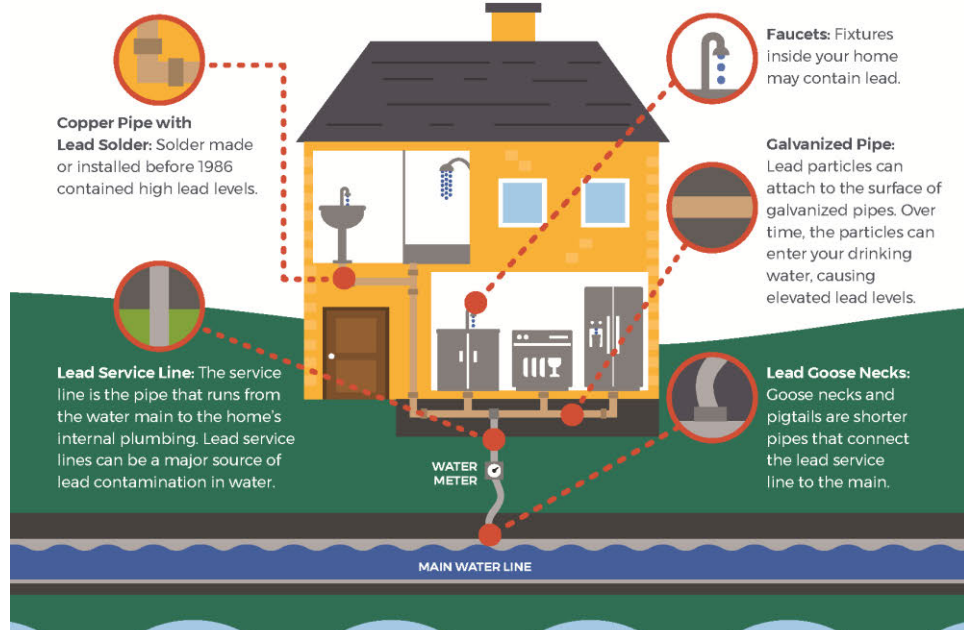
Director

Salisbury-Rowan Utilities



CONCERNED ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER?

# Sources of LEAD in Drinking Water



## Reduce Your Exposure To Lead



Use only cold water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula. *Boiling water does not remove lead from water.*



Regularly clean your faucet's screen (also known as an aerator).



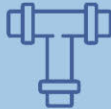
Consider using a water filter certified to remove lead and know when it's time to replace the filter.



Before drinking, flush your pipes by running your tap, taking a shower, doing laundry or a load of dishes.

To find out for certain if you have lead in drinking water, **have your water tested.**

## Replace Your Lead Service Line



Water systems are required to replace lead service lines if a water system cannot meet EPA's Lead Action Level through optimized corrosion control treatment.

Replacement of the lead service line is often the responsibility of both the utility and homeowner.

Homeowners can contact their water system to learn about how to remove the lead service line.

## Identify Other Lead Sources In Your Home

Lead in homes can also come from sources other than water. If you live in a home built before 1978, you may want to have your paint tested for lead. **Consider contacting your doctor to have your children tested if you are concerned about lead exposure.**



For more information, visit: [epa.gov/safewater](http://epa.gov/safewater)