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Philadelphia Water's Activities Under the Environmental Protection Agency's 1992 Lead and Copper Rule

Note: This timeline was presented to the City of Philadelphia City Council on March 21, 2016 and provides an overview of existing and future outreach, testing and lead water distribution pipe replacement efforts conducted by Philadelphia Water (PWD).

Background

- The Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) was promulgated in 1991. This rule set an action limit at 15 parts per billion (ppb) for lead computed as a 90th percentile statistic from sampling of homes or residential facilities. This action level is based on first flush, 1-liter size samples. The monitoring of lead and copper under the LCR is to determine whether corrosion control treatment (CCT) is needed.
- The Plumbing System Lead Ban and Notification Act of Pennsylvania, as of 1991, prohibited the sale of solder and flux exceeding 0.2 % lead and of plumbing pipe and fixtures exceeding 8.0% lead.
- Since 1992, PWD has conducted eight rounds of in-home sampling for compliance with the LCR. During the first round of sampling, in 1992, PWD was above the action level for lead. In subsequent rounds Philadelphia met the action level. PWD did not exceed the action limit for copper in any of the eight rounds of sampling.
- In 1994, following years of applied research for the control of lead and copper, all of PWD's three plants were using zinc orthophosphate for corrosion control.
- The 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act amendments established a "lead free" standard and after 1998 only "lead free" pipe, solder or flux could be used in the installation or repair of public water systems or in plumbing supplying drinking water that is connected to a public water supply.
- EPA's National Drinking Water Advisory Council on Lead met from 2014 to 2015 to make recommendations to EPA's guidelines on lead sampling protocols and lead service line replacement. PWD participated as a member of this national, expert committee.

Ongoing Public Education and Outreach

- Notification to property owners when lead service/distribution pipes are found when the water main is being replaced on a block. Customers are encouraged to replace the portion of the pipe between the curb and the meter.
- Issuance of an annual Drinking Water Quality Report to all customers that provides information on lead and other potential contaminants in drinking water. PWD has always met or does better than all state and federal standards developed to protect public health.
- Partnering with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health to provide ongoing education about the sources of lead in the environment (paint, soil, dust, water) through printed publications, websites, social media and partnerships.
- Provision of free lead sampling and audits to customers who call with concerns about lead in their drinking water.

Current and Near Term Activities

- Building an address-based information system that documents the locations of lead service lines based upon past construction work, lead sampling recruitment, and meter and customer service visits to a property.
- Developing fact sheets and public information materials based upon the recommendations of EPA's National Drinking Water Quality Council
- Revising standard contract requirements to allow for the replacement of the entire portion of a lead water service/distribution pipe, with the permission of the property owner, when a new water main is installed on the block.
- Developing a program to assist property owners with lead service/distribution pipes with a zero interest loan when PWD construction is not occurring on the block.

March 2016