

2019 Lead Sampling Results



Philadelphia successfully passed the most recent round of water quality testing for lead at customers' taps.

In addition to regular tests every year at home taps upon request, we also comply with federal drinking water regulations, defined in the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule. This rule requires us to sample water from taps in homes that have lead service lines every three years. 90 percent of the sampled homes must have lead levels under the action level of 15 ppb.

Numbers and percentages of homes tested	2019 June to September	2017 June to September	2014 June to September	2011 June to September	2008 June to September	2005 June to September	2002 June to September	1999 June to September	1998 June to September
Homes Tested*	99	89	134	92	97	107	63	59	78
Homes with lead levels below the action level of 15 ppb**	97 homes (98.0%)	86 homes (96.6%)	127 homes (94.8%)	90 homes (97.8%)	94 homes (96.9%)	98 homes (91.6%)	57 homes (90.5%)	55 homes (93.2%)	73 homes (93.6%)
Homes with lead levels above the action level of 15 ppb**	2 homes (2.0%)	3 homes (3.3%)	7 homes (5.2%)	2 homes (2.2%)	3 homes (3.1%)	9 homes (8.4%)	6 homes (9.5%)	4 homes (6.8%)	5 homes (6.4%)
90% of tested homes‡ were less than:	3 ppb	2 ppb	5 ppb	6 ppb	6 ppb	9 ppb	13 ppb	9 ppb	10 ppb

* According to the Lead and Copper Rule, PWD was required to test in 50 high-risk homes in 1998–2019. PWD tested for lead in more homes than required under the Lead and Copper Rule.

** Parts per Billion. ‡ EPA's action level for representative sampling of customers homes: 90% of homes must test less than 15 ppb

How many homes were sampled?

Between June and September 2019, we sampled water from 97 homes with lead service lines. A service line connects home plumbing to the City water main. In 98 percent of the homes with lead pipes where we sampled drinking water, we found lead concentrations that were less than 15 parts per billion (ppb). In order to meet federal standards defined in the Lead and Copper Rule, more than 90 percent of the sampled homes must have lead levels under the action level of 15 ppb. Philadelphia's water quality continues to meet or exceed all State and Federal standards.

Why do you sample water for lead in homes instead of at the treatment plant?

When lead is found in drinking water in Philadelphia, it comes from plumbing materials, not from the rivers or from City water mains. That is why guidelines, set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Lead and Copper Rule, require utilities like the Philadelphia Water Department to collect samples of water from homes that have service lines made from lead.

What do the results tell us?

Tests done at customer-owned taps consistently show that Philadelphia's corrosion control treatment is working. Before water leaves our treatment plants, we add zinc orthophosphate. When the water reaches homes with lead plumbing, the zinc orthophosphate coats pipes, making it less likely that the lead will get into the water. When we sample, we are checking to make sure the zinc orthophosphate is doing its job.

How long have you been doing this?

The Lead and Copper Rule has required approved corrosion control additives to keep lead from customers' pipes and fixtures from getting into their water since the 1990s. Our sampling results show that corrosion control has improved over the years.

Limiting Your Family's Exposure to Lead

Explore the City of Philadelphia Lead Guide to learn the dangers of lead, where lead is commonly found, and useful recommendations for keeping your home safe.

www.phila.gov/lead