



Debra A. McCarty, Water Commissioner

Written Testimony of the Philadelphia Water Department Before the Committee on Public Health and Human Services

Hon. Cindy Bass, Chair
Bill No. 160687
November 16, 2016

The Water Department supports [Bill No. 160687](#), as it is proposed to be amended. In connection with our discussion of that bill, we would also like to take this opportunity to provide a detailed update on our activities since PWD's [last appearance on the issue of lead service lines and plumbing components before City Council in March](#).

Overall, the Water Department has expanded and strengthened our lead safety programming to:

1. **Speed up the pace** at which customer lead service lines are identified and customers are encouraged to replace their lead water lines.
2. **Educate our customers** about new guidelines and programs for lead safety with respect to drinking water.
3. **Add new incentives** for customer participation in our Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) testing program.

Providing safe drinking water to the City's residents and visitors is the most important thing we do. For decades, we have maintained and monitored a corrosion control program that entails treating our drinking water with zinc orthophosphate to help prevent lead from leaching from customer-owned service lines, plumbing fixtures and solder.

We will continue to do so in accordance with EPA and DEP rules and regulations, and contribute to the ongoing national discussion on drinking water and lead safety. We also pledge to update Council on the status of our work to protect and maintain the safety of our water.

1. Lead service line identification and replacement

- This summer, PWD implemented [an interest-free loan program](#) for customers to replace their lead service lines. As of October 31st, 19 customers have replaced their lead service lines through this program. As with our long-standing HELP loan program, PWD contracts with a private plumber to replace the customer's lead service line, and the customer repays the City over 60 months.
- Starting with our FY17 water main replacement contracts, PWD implemented a full lead service line replacement program during capital projects. When we find a lead service line during a water main relay, PWD will fully replace it at no cost to the customer. As of October 31st, no lead service lines have been discovered during our two active water main relay jobs; thus no lead service lines have yet been replaced as part of this full replacement program. However, we will

continue to notify customers of this option and track replacements when they are made. (Please note that the customer must consent to PWD entering the home to make a full replacement from the main to the meter.)

- At a customer's request, PWD will continue to help identify lead service lines in homes and provide water testing. (Please note that private plumbers and labs are available to provide these services as well.)
- When our Meter Shop or Customer Field Services Units are called to visit homes in their normal course of business, we check for lead service lines by examining the water pipe entering through the basement wall. If our staff finds a lead service line, we provide the customer a notification letter, [cleaning tips for faucet aerators and flushing instructions](#) for plumbing and information about the [lead service line replacement loan](#) described above.
- In October, CMC Energy Services—our current LICAP provider—also began checking for lead service lines when performing home plumbing audits for low income customers.
- We have enhanced our Lead Service Line database to capture lead service lines identified during water main replacement and PWD customer service related activities. We are also developing maps to show the results of home water testing across the City down to the ZIP code and neighborhood levels. These maps will be made publicly available.

2. Expanded and improved customer outreach and education

- We constantly work to make our website as informative and customer-friendly as possible, and [our lead information page](#) is no different. We recently updated the site to include information on a number of new customer-focused programs in addition to information about checking home plumbing for lead, options for dealing with a lead service line including replacement, availability of free lead testing provided by PWD, and a variety of illustrative fact sheets. Our lead safety website is available at: www.phila.gov/water/wu/drinkingwater/lead.

In addition, we have a [dedicated web page](#) for customers who are having the water mains on their block replaced, as we are offering full lead service line replacement during these projects, as discussed above. The direct link to this web page is: www.phila.gov/water/replaceLSL.

- We've also made our fact sheets more customer-friendly and are currently translating them into the top 10 languages by population. We are proactively reaching out to customers about lead safety and will be [including a bill stuffer](#) in an upcoming water bill before the end of this year.
- Since March, PWD has provided 11 [presentations](#) to community groups about lead in drinking water and the numerous programs described here. We will continue to do so and welcome your

assistance in connecting us with your constituents. We also welcome the opportunity to provide [this presentation](#) to City Council constituent staff, as they are often on the frontline when addressing citizen concerns.

- We also have a Homeowner's Guide in the works which will provide information not only on lead but on water quality in general, billing, assistance programs, service requests, and contact information. This guide is scheduled for publication in January 2017.
- We have issued a small RFP seeking a non-profit partner with proven experience in community-based organizing to assist us with raising awareness around issues of lead in drinking water. A special focus will be on the sources of lead in drinking water, PWD's upcoming 2017 lead sampling program, and actions that customers can take to mitigate the impact of lead service lines and solder in home plumbing. The ideal candidate will focus on two economically distressed neighborhoods that have proven difficult for PWD to reach. We anticipate that this program will serve as a pilot for similar initiatives in hard to reach communities.

3. Continued Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) compliance

- In agreement with the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) and the EPA, we are currently conducting an extra round of residential lead sampling. While we are still collecting and analyzing results, we expect to meet the [Lead and Copper Rule](#) (LCR) standard again, as we have since 1997 when Philadelphia began optimizing its corrosion control treatment. We hope that such additional testing will give our customers a greater sense of security about their drinking water.
- We updated the PWD regulations, effective July 1, 2016, to allow for a \$50 water bill credit to customers who participate in our regulatory lead sampling program. This credit is currently available to customers participating in our 2016 sampling round described above. We will notify customers of this credit during our 2017 LCR sampling recruitment, and we hope this incentive will drive up participation going forward.

4. Bill No. 160687.

With respect to Bill No. 160687, we are happy to work with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health to develop guidance to tenants that "identifies and explains best practices with respect to potential health hazards related to lead...and water quality." ([See proposed amendments to Bill No. 160687.](#)) Such guidance will include flushing instructions to better ensure our customers are drinking fresh water from the main. We want our customers to understand the steps they can take to improve the quality of the drinking water in their homes. We take the safety of our customers very seriously, and drinking water quality has been and will remain a top priority for the Water Department.