



Water Service Line Inventory Frequently Asked Questions

(updated 11/22/2024)

1. Why is South Tahoe Public Utility District (District) conducting a water service line inventory?

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) updated the Lead and Copper Rule requiring all public water systems nationwide to create an inventory of all water service lines, regardless of ownership, and make it available to the public no later than the rule compliance date of October 2024. Within a month of submitting the report, water districts must notify customers if their water service line was identified as lead or an unknown material. The intent of this regulation is to identify any lead service lines and develop a replacement plan for them.

2. What is a water service line?

Water service lines are the pipes that carry water from the water main in the street to the home or business.

3. Who owns the water service line?

South Tahoe Public Utility District owns the water service line from the main in the street to the meter box, and the property owner owns the water service line from the meter box to their home.

4. What materials can service lines be made of?

Service lines can be made of lead, galvanized steel or iron, plastic, or copper. Exposure to lead in drinking water can cause serious health problems. Fortunately, lead pipes were not commonly used in California, and the District has not seen lead service lines in our water system at this point in time.

5. How can I find out the material of my water service line?

1. Locate your water service line – it usually enters your home through a crawlspace or garage.
2. Scratch test – find a spot on the water service line closest to the wall or floor where it enters. Use a screwdriver or coin to scratch lightly (like a lottery ticket). What color is it? If it's black, green, white, or blue, it's plastic. If it's copper in color, like a penny, then it's copper. If it's hard to scrape, the scraped area remains a dull gray, and a magnet sticks, it's galvanized. If it's shiny and silver and a magnet does NOT stick, it's lead.
3. Take a picture – where you performed the scratch test.
4. Complete the online survey at stpud.watersmart.com/WaterLineSurvey

6. Can STPUD help me identify my service line material?

The District is planning to have staff available to assist customers with the identification of their service line material beginning in Spring 2025. If you are interested in having District staff assist you, please contact Customer Service at cs@stpud.us or 530-544-6474 to be

added to the waiting list. If you would like to identify your service line material before Spring 2025 and need assistance, you may consider contacting a plumber.

7. If I do NOT have a lead service line, why do I have to fill out the District's online survey?

Every year, all water districts in the United States must submit a report to their state's division of drinking water on the material of every water service line. If the service line material is unknown or lead, the water district must notify the customer each year. By identifying and reporting the material of your water service line, you are protecting your family and our community from lead.

8. Is there lead in my drinking water?

There is no lead in the water supplied by the District's wells. However, lead can get into your drinking water as it passes through pipes and plumbing materials that contain lead. In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes, and other plumbing material to 8.0%. In the same year, California enacted an even more restrictive lead plumbing ban. If your home was built after 1986, your service line should not be lead. If your home was built before 1986, you can do a scratch test to determine the material of your water service line, see Question 5. If you have old brass or bronze fixtures, you may want to test your water for lead, see Question 10.

9. What are the health risks associated with lead?

Exposure to lead in drinking water can cause serious health effects in all age groups. Infants and children can have decreases in IQ and attention span. Lead exposure can cause new learning and behavior problems or exacerbate existing learning and behavior problems. The children of women who are exposed to lead before or during pregnancy can have increased risk of these adverse health effects. Adults can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney or nervous system problems.

10. Should I get my water tested for lead?

There is no lead in the water supplied by the District's wells. However, lead can get into your drinking water as it passes through pipes and plumbing that contains lead. If your home was built after 1986, there should not be lead in your water. If you did the scratch test and think you have a lead service line, and/or have old brass faucets, you may want to get your water tested for lead.

11. How do I get my water tested for lead?

Call our Customer Service Department at 530-544-6474. You may ask them for more guidance based on what you found when doing the scratch test on your service line and the year your house was built. The cost for lead testing is \$40. You will need to pick up a sample bottle, chain of custody form, and instructions from our Customer Service desk located at 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

12. Why do I have to pay to get my water tested for lead?

The District collects over 2,000 drinking water samples throughout our system annually to ensure we are meeting all state and federal water quality standards and providing our community with clean drinking water. To see an annual summary of water quality results, check out the Consumer Confidence Report at <https://www.stpud.us/water-quality-reports>. The District’s lab is not currently certified to do metal testing. As such, it costs the District around \$100 to process lead samples. The District is offering a subsidized rate of \$40 per water sample with follow-up sampling included for customers who are concerned that their home plumbing may contain lead.

13. Where can I find more information about my water quality?

Every year, the District publishes a Consumer Confidence Report regarding our service area’s water quality. You can read it online at: <https://www.stpud.us/water-quality-reports>

14. How can I protect myself from lead?

If you are unsure about lead levels in your home, you can take the following precautions:

1. Water Service Line Scratch Test – Do a scratch and magnet test on your water service line to see if it is lead or not.
2. Flush your tap. Run water for 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold to flush lead from interior plumbing before using it for drinking or cooking.
3. Use cold water for cooking. Lead dissolves more easily in hot water so use cold water for cooking or to make baby formula. Boiling water does not remove lead.
4. Filter the water. You may want to consider purchasing a water filter if lead is present in the water. Read the package to be sure the filter is certified to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800-673-8010 or www.nsf.org for information on performance standards for water filters.
5. Identify and replace plumbing fixtures containing lead. Brass faucets, fittings and valves, including those advertised as “lead-free,” may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8% lead to be labeled as “lead free.” Visit www.nsf.org to learn more about lead-containing plumbing fixtures.
6. Test your water for lead. If you think you have a lead service line and/or old brass fixtures that you are concerned about, call South Tahoe Public Utility District at 530-544-6474 to find out how to get your water tested for lead.

15. I’m a tenant, what can I do to find out if the plumbing in my rental house has lead?

Tenants can also do the scratch test to help identify the water service line material and fill out the online form. You can also contact South Tahoe Public Utility District at 530-544-6474 to find out how to get your water tested for lead. If you’re concerned about old plumbing or fixtures that may contain lead, flush your tap water for 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold to flush lead from interior plumbing before using it for drinking or cooking.

16. Why do you not know the material of my water service lines?

The District owns the water pipe from the water main in the street to the meter at the edge of your property. The homeowner owns the waterline from the meter to their home. We are asking homeowners to help determine the material of the water service line that is privately owned. We are also working to identify the material of the service lines owned by the District. We will be looking at data collected when meters were installed, past water infrastructure projects, and permitting/inspection records. The District's water system is a patchwork of old smaller water systems; we did not build the system. As such, the records are not always straightforward, and we will be field verifying information.

17. What is the District's plan for identifying and replacing water service lines that are lead?

In Spring 2025, the District will be assisting customers with identifying the material of their water service line. If you would like assistance, please contact Customer Service at 530-544-6474 to get on the waiting list. The District is hiring a consultant to help complete the water service line assessment. Once we know if there are lead water service lines in our community, we will work with the state to try and secure grant funding to replace lead water service lines. We will continue to update our water service line inventory and submit the report annually to the Division of Drinking Water.