



Water Service Line Inspection FAQ's

Updated June 2024

Is my water safe to drink?

Yes. See our *Water Customers' Guide to Lead Safety* to learn more about measures BWW takes to protect customers from lead in privately-owned pipes and interior plumbing, and steps you can take to minimize any potential exposure.

What is a water service line?

It is the privately-owned, small diameter pipe connecting the plumbing inside your home or building to a BWW water main. It includes the pipe on both sides of a BWW-owned meter pit. Please read our *Lead Service Line Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)* to learn more about water service lines, ownership and maintenance responsibilities, and how to check the service line material where it enters your home or building.

Why is BWW inspecting my water service line?

BWW, like all public water systems across the United States, is currently completing an inventory of every service line pipe connected to its water distribution system. USEPA requires us to identify the location and material of each service line, including all privately-owned service lines and even those that may be connected to vacant buildings. BWW has completed extensive work to research and review historical records that describe service line pipe materials for many customers. Your service line may have been randomly selected to confirm the accuracy of those records, or because our records do not provide enough information to identify the pipe material. A visual inspection is needed to confirm the presence or absence of lead or galvanized steel pipes on one or both sides of the meter pit the service line passes through.

How does BWW inspect water service lines for lead and restore the yard?

In most cases, a visual inspection of the service line, particularly the section between the water main and meter pit, requires excavating a small hole to access the pipe. A contractor with specialized hydro-excavating equipment will use a high-pressure stream of water and a suction hose to excavate down to the top of the pipe. Typically, this involves making one hole on each side of the meter pit.

Once an inspector determines the pipe material, clean soil is used to fill the hole. If possible, the sod on top of the holes will be cut, saved and replaced afterward. Otherwise, grass seed or new sod will be applied. A BWW representative will check on the property restoration within a few weeks to make sure everything has been fully restored. We will make every effort to avoid damaging flowers, shrubs, and trees. If it becomes necessary to remove vegetation, BWW will replace what is growing on private property that is not in the utility right-of-way. In rare instances, it may become necessary to use a backhoe to reach a pipe if hydro-excavation cannot be used. All paved surfaces will be restored.





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Why can't you just inspect the pipe in the meter pit?

Most of our meter pits were installed with short sections of copper pipe that connect to the original service line. The service line material from the water main to the meter pit and from the meter pit to the building may be different from the meter pit pipe and from each other.

Are there other ways to inspect my pipe without excavating on my property?

If the pipe is completely inaccessible to hydro-excavate, we may ask for your cooperation in allowing our staff or a contractor to inspect the service line where it enters your building. Water testing can help confirm the presence of lead if samples are collected following special procedures, but it cannot verify a service line is lead-free. Currently, there are no metal detectors or other technologies available that are proven to consistently find lead buried that deep without exposing the pipe.

Do I need to sign a Right-of-Entry form?

A small number of customers may be asked to sign a Right-of-Entry form if BWW determines excavation or inspection work may extend onto your property outside of the utility right-of-way or inside the building. You will receive a form along with the letter and this FAQs sheet if one is needed for your property. Please sign the form and return it in the pre-addressed envelope that was provided.

Will I be able to use water during the inspection?

Yes, you can continue to use water during inspection. In rare instances, we may shut off water if there is a concern about the integrity of the pipe. If that happens, we will try to alert everyone who is present in the building.

Who can I contact if I am worried about the inspection or property damage?

Inspections will be scheduled during the work-week Monday through Friday. If you have concerns, please contact our Water Quality Team at (205) 244-4375.

How will I learn about the results?

If the service line field inspection result indicates lead, galvanized requiring replacement, or lead status unknown, then a letter will be mailed to you between October 16 and November 15. If lead or galvanized requiring replacement is confirmed, a copy of our [*Water Customers' Guide to Lead Safety*](#) and other reference materials can be accessed on the website listed below.