

Lead and Copper Rule FAQ

What is the Lead and Copper Rule?

- The Lead and Copper Rule is the federal regulation that determines how water systems should treat drinking water to reduce lead and copper exposure from household plumbing.

Is Gresham in compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule?

- Yes. Gresham purchases most of the City's drinking water from the Portland Water Bureau. Since 1997, Portland has been in compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule.
- Gresham supports the rule by providing water sampling, conducting education and outreach, and partnering with Multnomah County to provide free testing for lead in drinking water.

Is Gresham's drinking water safe?

- Yes. Gresham provides safe drinking water to about 70,000 customers.
- For a copy of Gresham's Water Quality Report, go to: www.GreshamOregon.gov/2017wqr

Is there lead in Gresham's water?

- Water-related lead exposure in Gresham is linked to household plumbing, not to lead in our water or distribution system. Gresham's drinking water comes from primarily two high-quality sources –protected water from Portland's Bull Run Watershed and Gresham and Rockwood's Cascade well field. On occasion, Gresham also delivers water from Portland's protected Columbia South Shore well field. Gresham's drinking water meets or exceeds all federal and state drinking water standards.

Other cities have lead features in their water distribution system. Does Gresham?

- No. Gresham has no lead service lines or pigtailed in its system.

What are the sources of lead in drinking water in Gresham?

- In Gresham, the homes most at risk for lead in water are homes with copper pipes joined with lead solder. These were generally built or plumbed between 1970 and 1985. However, the homes with the greatest risk for exposure to lead are those with lead-based paint, usually built before 1960.

Who is most at risk for lead in water?

- Children under six and pregnant women are most at risk for lead exposure.

What is the federal standard for lead?

- The Lead and Copper Rule set the federal action level for lead at 15 parts per billion (ppb). This means that if ten percent of water samples from Tier 1 Homes (see below) return lead levels of over 15 ppb, a water provider is required take action. This includes informing the public of steps to take to prevent exposure to lead in water.

Is Gresham's drinking water treated to reduce lead?

- Yes. Since 1997 the Portland Water Bureau has been adding sodium hydroxide, also known as caustic soda, to increase the pH of its drinking water.

How many at-risk homes potentially exceed the federal action level of 15 ppb?

- Based on testing through the Joint Monitoring program (of which Gresham is a member), up to 10% of the at-risk homes may have elevated levels of lead that could exceed the federal action level of 15 ppb. These customers are provided information on how to reduce exposure to lead and encouraged to test for lead.

How does Gresham monitor for lead in water?

- Gresham monitors for lead in water in some of the highest-risk homes in its service area. These homes, referred to as Tier 1 homes, were built or plumbed from 1983-1985 and were confirmed to have lead solder in their household plumbing. These homes are sampled every 6 months by testing the water after it has been sitting in the home plumbing for at least 6 hours, which is expected to represent the highest likely occurrence of lead.

What is a Tier 1 Home?

- "Tier 1 Home" is a regulatory term that is defined as a home with a lead service line or a home built or plumbed between 1983 and June 30, 1985, that has lead solder.

What does Gresham do to reduce exposure to lead in water?

- The Bull Run water Gresham buys from Portland is treated with sodium hydroxide to reduce the potential for lead corrosion in home plumbing.
- Gresham conducts an extensive education and outreach to customers in the most at-risk homes.

- Gresham Provides information to all customers about simple steps they can take to reduce their exposure to lead in water.
- Gresham partners with Portland and Multnomah County to provide free testing for lead in drinking water.

How can I tell if I have lead in my water?

- By testing your water. Gresham offers free test kits. Contact the LeadLine at www.leadline.org or calling 503-988-4000.

What can I do if I have lead in my water?

- There are three common-sense steps people can take:
 - Run your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using the water for drinking or cooking after it has been standing for several hours.
 - Filter your water. Tests have shown more than 90% reduction of lead in water from this simple step.
 - Contact your local plumber to evaluate the possibility of replacing your plumbing.

What are other sources of exposure to lead?

- In Gresham, the greatest source of exposure to lead is lead-based paint. Homes older than 1960 are most likely to have high levels of lead-based paint. To learn more about ways to reduce your exposure to all sources of lead contact the LeadLine at www.leadline.org or 503-988-4000.

How can I test my child for lead exposure?

- Multnomah County provides free tests. You can have your child tested by your pediatrician through the LeadLine. Dates and times of free blood lead testing clinics can be found at www.leadline.org.

For more information on water quality or questions regarding lead, please contact:

Rick Hill
Water Quality Specialist
503-618-2626