

Highland Park Lead Service Line Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is a water service line?

Water service lines are small pipes that carry water from the Highland Park's water mains, located in the streets, into homes and other buildings.

2. How do I find where the water service line is on my property?

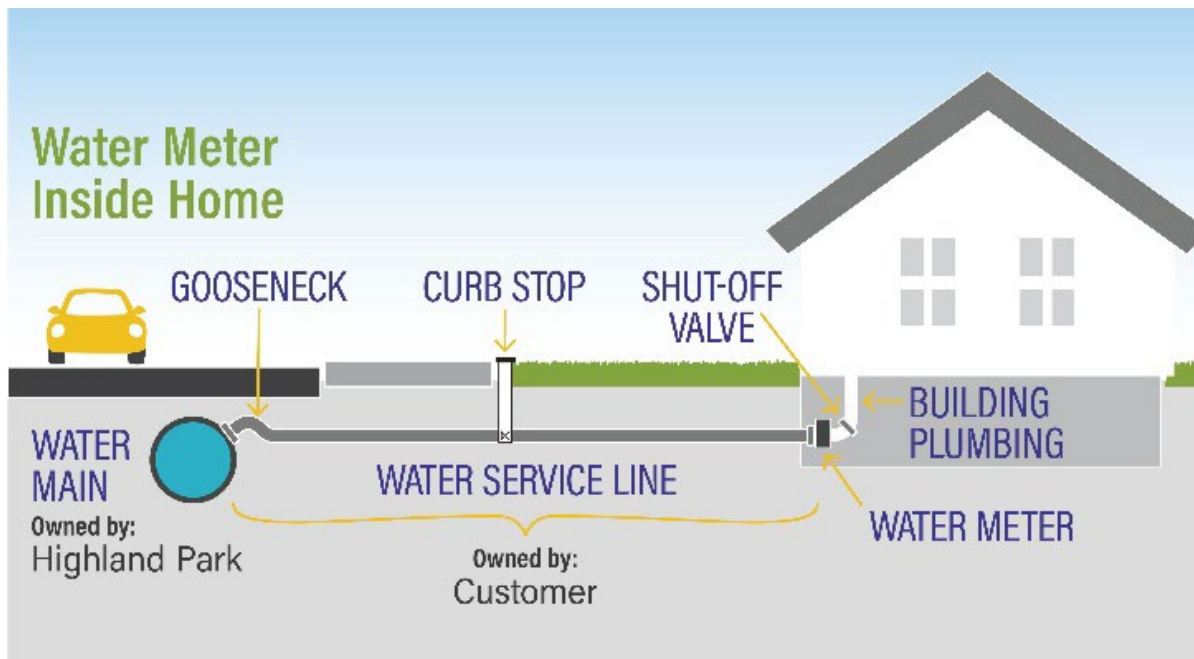
You can find your water service line by first finding the water meter in your basement, which measures the amount of water entering your home each day. The water service line is the pipe that connects to the water meter, then goes outdoors to the water main in the street. For help locating the water service line, call 1-888-691-2042.



What your water meter looks like

3. Who is responsible for the water service line on my property?

In the Borough of Highland Park, the property owner is responsible for the service line from the main in the street to the meter inside the home.



4. What type of materials can service lines be made of?

Service lines can be made of lead, galvanized steel, plastic, brass, copper, cast iron, or ductile iron.

5. Why does the water service line or plumbing fixture at my home contain lead?

Lead was commonly used for water service lines until 1960 and in household plumbing fixtures and solder until 1986, when it was banned. From 1986 to 2014, plumbing fixtures could contain up to 8% lead to be categorized as “lead free”. However, current standards for “lead free” fixtures allow no more than 0.25% of lead content.

Many homes and buildings, especially those built before 1986, may have service lines and/or plumbing and fixtures that are made of or contain lead.

6. What other sources of lead are there in my home?

Other sources of lead can include plumbing fixtures (faucets, valves, fittings, etc.), indoor copper plumbing pipes with lead solder, and lead paint. Lead paint in a home is typically the greatest contributor to lead exposure for young children.

7. What level of lead is safe to consume?

All lead exposure has risk. Therefore, there is no safe level of lead. Working with the community, Highland Park hopes to remove all lead service lines in their service area to protect customers’ health.

8. How can I tell if my plumbing fixtures have lead or lead solder in them?

Many homes and buildings, especially those built before 1986, may have service lines and/or internal plumbing and fixtures that are made of or contain lead. A licensed plumber can help figure out if you have lead material in your indoor plumbing. You can also use a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved lead test kit, such as the:

- a. EPA-approved lead test kit (www.epa.gov/lead/lead-test-kits)
- b. 3M Lead Check Swabs (www.amazon.com/3M-717834209102DUPE-LeadCheck-Swabs-8-Pack/dp/B008BK15PU)

9. Why is Highland Park doing a lead pipe replacement program now?

Highland Park is starting a lead pipe replacement initiative to meet New Jersey legislation signed into law on July 22, 2021, to replace all lead and galvanized steel service lines by 2031. Utilities must work with the property owners to replace all lead and galvanized steel service line from the water main in the street to the connection inside the home.

10. Why is Highland Park also replacing galvanized steel service lines?

Galvanized service lines are steel pipes dipped in a protective zinc coating to prevent corrosion and rust. Galvanized piping was commonly used homes built before 1960 as an alternative to lead pipes for water supply lines.

Lead particles can attach to the surface of galvanized pipes, and some galvanized pipes are lead-lined or were made with lead in the pipe wall material. Over time, the lead particles can enter your drinking water from the pipes.

11. Who provides my water?

Highland Park is responsible for the water mains that provide water to your property. Middlesex Water Company (Middlesex Water) supplies the actual water from its CJA Treatment plant in Edison.

12. Does my water system have lead service lines?

Yes, since much of the Borough's infrastructure was built before 1986, Highland Park's water system has lead service lines.

13. What are Highland Park and Middlesex Water doing to decrease lead in my water?

Middlesex Water uses pH control and adds corrosion control treatment to your water to minimize lead amounts. The treatment, zinc orthophosphate, coats the service lines helping to minimize the amount of lead dissolving into the water from the lead service lines, lead solder and older fixtures. The coating is effective, however, requires water to be used consistently to maintain the coating. When the water stagnates in a lead service line for an extended period, lead can still leach into the drinking water.

14. Has Middlesex Water's regular water testing shown high lead levels?

Middlesex Water tests water every six months in at least 100 homes in the distribution system, in compliance with state and federal requirements. The test results have never been above the EPA's lead or copper action levels. As a small system, the Borough tests for lead in 30 homes every three years which have also never been above the lead or copper action levels.

Test results from individual homes can show higher levels of lead depending on individual water usage and piping components, such as lead or galvanized steel service lines, plumbing materials, brass fittings, or lead solder on interior home plumbing.

15. How does lead get into the drinking water?

Lead can get into drinking water from the plumbing inside your building or the service line between the street and your house. When water sits in the service line or your building's plumbing without being used for several hours, such as overnight, the lead may dissolve into the water.

When water leaves Middlesex Water's water treatment plant, it does not have lead. Highland Park's water mains in the street that transport water from the treatment plant are made mostly of iron and steel, and do not add lead to the drinking water. Therefore, the best way to stop lead from getting into your drinking water is replacing the water service line and older plumbing and fixtures in your home.

16. How can I get my water tested for lead?

A state-approved laboratory can test your water for lead. If the water testing results find lead levels at or greater than 15 parts per billion, call 1-888-691-2042 to request an investigation for the cause of the high level.

17. How do I know if I have a lead or galvanized steel service line that requires replacement?

Public community water systems in New Jersey were required to notify residents who are served by a known lead service line by certified mail within thirty (30) days after the submission of the initial service line inventory to the Department in January 2022, and after the submission of the updated inventory in July 2022. If you did not receive a mailing, it is possible you may still have a lead service line, but Highland Park may not currently be aware of the materials of your service line. If you are a renter, you should ask your landlord if such a notice was sent to them. Additionally, Highland Park has made their service line inventory publicly available on their website.

18. I did not receive a letter about my water service line but someone I know (e.g., your neighbor) received a mailing, why is this?

It may be that your home is not served by a lead service line, or it is possible you may still have a lead service line, but Highland Park may not currently be aware of the materials of your service line. Highland Park is currently updating their service line inventory to reduce the number of unknown materials.

19. Why did I receive a letter from my water system saying I have a lead service line?

You received this notice because in July 2021, the Lead Service Line Replacement Law was enacted, requiring all community water systems to replace lead service lines in their service area within 10 years. Under this law, community water systems are required to notify customers, non-paying consumers, and any off-site owner of a property (e.g., landlord) when it is known they are served by a lead service line. Note that the definition of lead service line now includes galvanized service lines. If you have a galvanized service line, you will receive this notice as well. While lead in drinking water is understood to pose health risks, your water system is required to address lead issues in the drinking water. This includes extensive monitoring and treatment requirements to ensure that water systems provide water which is less likely to corrode lead plumbing.

20. I received a letter saying I have a galvanized service line, what does that mean?

Galvanized service lines are steel pipes that have been dipped in a protective zinc coating to prevent corrosion and rust. Galvanized piping was commonly installed in homes built before 1960 and was used as an alternative to lead pipes for water supply lines. Galvanized lines that are or were downstream of a lead source such as a lead service line can contribute to lead in drinking water. They also can capture lead from upstream lead sources and release lead if water quality changes or these pipes are disturbed. Per the Lead Service Line Replacement Law, galvanized service lines are also considered lead service lines for the purposes of identification and replacement. The notices described above are also required to be sent to addresses served by galvanized lines. If you have a galvanized service line in your home, it will need to be replaced just as a lead service line would.

21. If my home's plumbing has lead parts (service line, solder, etc.) how can I protect myself right now?

If you think you have lead parts, flush your system by running cold water for about 3-5 minutes whenever the water in your home has not been used for more than 6 hours. A licensed plumber can also replace pipes that have lead solder or lead parts with lead-free pipes. You can also add a faucet filter or pitcher filter for drinking water that is NSF 42 and 53 certified to remove lead.

22. How can lead affect my health?

Exposure to high levels of lead is a serious health risk. Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells, and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children, pregnant women, and unborn babies. Amounts of lead that may not seriously harm adults can slow down children's normal mental and physical development, particularly those under 6 years old.

23. How can I decrease lead exposure in my drinking water?

You can take several actions to decrease your lead exposure in drinking water, including:

- Buying a National Sanitation Foundation (NSF)-Certified home water treatment device, faucet, or pitcher filter that removes lead. The device must be both NSF 42- and NSF 53-certified to remove lead. Devices and filters installed at the faucet will remove lead from indoor plumbing and plumbing fixtures. More information about NSF filters and a list of certified filters can be found on this website: [Certified Product Listings for Lead Reduction](#)
- Buying plumbing fixtures (faucets, valves, sinks, hose bibs, etc.) that have zero- or low-lead content meeting the current "lead-free" requirements. Read the labels of any new plumbing fixtures closely.
- Running tap water for about five minutes before you use it for drinking or cooking, if the water has gone unused for more than 6 hours. This flushes the standing water and gets fresh water from the water main pipe.
- Using fresh, cold, running water for drinking, cooking, and preparing baby formula.
- Removing and cleaning faucet screens and aerators every 6 months.

Do not boil water to remove lead. Boiling water does not remove lead and can instead increase the amount of lead in water.

24. Can I shower in lead-contaminated water?

Yes. Human skin does not absorb lead in water. Bathing and showering is safe for you and your children, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level.

25. I have a private well, do I need to worry about lead in my drinking water?

There are no private wells in operation in Highland Park; however, residents served by private wells may still have exposure to lead in drinking water via lead service lines, plumbing in their homes, or rarely, lead in groundwater. Residences which were built prior to 1988 may be at higher risk, as lead solder, or other components using lead may have been used during construction. Owners of homes served by private wells should consider testing their water for lead both at the source, as well as at their tap.

- [Frequently Asked Questions for Private Wells](#) (NJDOH)
- [Lead and Drinking Water from Private Wells](#) (CDC)

26. Where can I get more information about lead in drinking water?

- The Highland Park Lead Information Page: [Highland Park's Lead Information](#)
- The EPA's Lead and Copper Rule website: [EPA's Lead and Copper Rule](#)
- The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Lead and Copper Rule website: [New Jersey's Lead and Copper Rule](#)