

Long-Awaited Update to EPA's Lead & Copper Rule

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On December 22, 2020, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the first update since 1991 to the Lead and Copper Rule. This update aims to further protect children and communities from exposure to lead in drinking water.

Lead and copper typically enter drinking water from the corrosion of lead and copper pipes. While EPA has restricted the lead content allowed in plumbing materials used in new construction and replacement of existing materials, many communities are still served by lead service lines (LSLs). The recently announced revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule seek to accelerate the implementation of lead-free infrastructure and to improve risk communication to consumers. Although the update does not lower the lead action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), the rule contains the following key changes:

- Requiring all water systems to prepare and maintain LSL inventories and to engage in a “find and fix” process to identify and remediate elevated lead levels;
- Increasing tap water sampling reliability with new sampling criteria and collection requirements;
- Requiring testing in elementary schools and child care facilities for the first time;
- Establishing a new “trigger level” of 10 ppb. At this trigger level, water systems are required to conduct a corrosion control study (if they do not already treat for pipe corrosion);
- Accelerating lead service line replacements. Water systems that are above the 10 ppb trigger level but below the 15 ppb action level must work with their state to set LSL removal targets, and systems above the action level must replace at least 3% of LSLs annually; and
- Requiring water systems to publicize the locations of LSLs and notify consumers of any system-wide action level exceedances.

The rule has not yet been published to the *Federal Register*, but the pre-publication version is available [here](#). The rule will be effective 60 days after the date of publication in the *Federal Register*.

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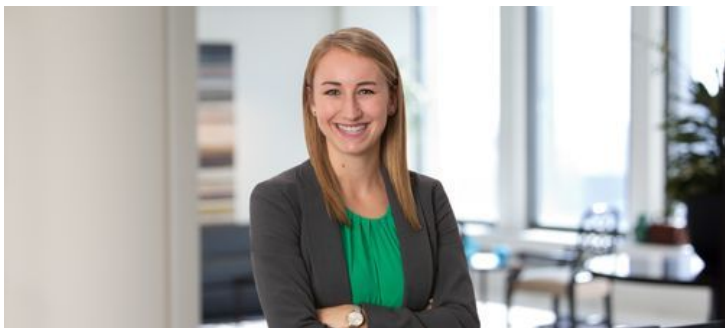
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