



DRINKING WATER AND LEAD.....

Could I have lead in my drinking water?

Lead is not present in detectable amounts in Broomfield’s source water, nor is it present leaving the water treatment facility. However, as water travels through the distribution system, it may pick up lead from plumbing materials such as pipes, solder, fixtures, and joints. Lead service lines and pipes have never been used in construction in Broomfield, so sources of lead in our drinking water are primarily limited to solder and fixtures. Federal regulations banned the manufacture and use of lead solder in 1986, however “lead-free” does not mean that the materials contain no lead, but only that they meet the regulatory definition. Legally-installed “lead-free” pipes and fixtures may contain up to 8% lead, and solder or flux up to 0.2% lead. Lead from these sources may leach into drinking water if the water is in contact with the material for a long period of time, or if the water is too corrosive.

How is lead tested in drinking water?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires Public Water Systems to test for lead on a regular basis using procedures laid out in the Lead and Copper Rule. The rule requires that samples be collected from customer’s homes using specific site-selection and sampling methods designed to identify the highest lead levels to which consumers might be exposed. Sample sites must be chosen to reflect the highest risk of elevated lead levels, generally homes with lead pipe, lead service lines, or copper pipe with lead solder installed within 5 years prior to the lead ban (1982 - 1987). Samples must be “first draw” samples collected after the water has been standing motionless in the pipes for at least six hours; no water may be used during the standing period. Compliance for lead is based on an “Action Level” of 15 parts per billion (ppb); if more than 10% of the samples are above 15 ppb, the system must take action to reduce lead levels.

“My water quality report says that lead is only tested every three years. Why isn’t it tested more often?” Between 1992 and 1995, EPA required water systems to collect samples from established high-risk sample sites twice per year. During this period, Broomfield’s collected more than 200 samples from its pool of 85 homes; the results met the Action Level for lead in every study. Because our lead levels are consistently low, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has granted permission to sample less frequently. Broomfield now samples about 40-45 homes every three years.

In addition to the studies that are required by the regulations and reported in the Annual Water Quality Report, Broomfield also collects at least two weekly samples from various public, commercial, and residential sample sites representing all areas of Broomfield. These samples are collected during periods of normal water use, as opposed to “first draw” samples, so any lead from sources such as the water main, meter, or service line that might be missed during regulatory sampling would be detected. Lead is seldom detected in this additional sampling, and has never exceeded the Action Level.

Have any Broomfield homes ever exceeded the Action Level for lead?

Occasionally, a first draw sample will have lead levels higher than 15 ppb. When this happens, we ask the customer to collect another first draw sample to confirm the original result. We also ask him/her to flush the tap for 30 seconds, and then collect a second sample. In every case, flushing for a few seconds to clear the tap and household plumbing has reduced lead levels far below any level of concern.

Actions homeowners can take to reduce potential exposure to lead in drinking water

- ◆ Always use cold water to prepare food or beverages; hot water can pick up lead or other metals from your plumbing or hot water tank.
- ◆ If the water has not been used for several hours, flush the tap by running the cold water for 30-60 seconds before using water for drinking or cooking. In tests of Broomfield's residential drinking water taps, results have shown that flushing the tap for 30 seconds reduces the level of any lead that may be present far below any level of concern.
- ◆ Periodically remove and clean the strainer/aerator on your faucet to remove debris.
- ◆ Boiling your water will not remove lead!

Infants and young children are typically more vulnerable to lead in drinking water than the general population. If you are concerned about elevated lead levels in your home's water, you may wish to have your water tested. Broomfield's Water Quality Laboratory will be happy to provide testing services; call 303.464.5606 or 303.464.5600 to schedule testing. Additional information is available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1.800.426.4791.

Additional Information

For additional information on this issue, or any other water quality question or problem, please call the Water Quality Laboratory at 303.464.5606 or 303.464.5600.