

plasticpollutioncoalition



Filtered Not Bottled, Plastic-Free Pipes How to Protect Your Community from Toxic Plastics During U.S. Lead Pipe Replacements

Background

Water comes to your tap through "service lines." Some of these service lines are made of lead, which is a dangerous toxic chemical that can damage the kidneys and affect brain development in children. **Lead exposure can have serious health consequences.**

A [study](#) conducted by the Natural Resources Defense Council estimates that there are as many as 12 million lead pipes that carry water into the homes of 22 million or more people.

This is a public health emergency and the solution is clear: we must expeditiously replace all lead service pipes in the United States.

The federal government recently approved [\\$15 billion dollars](#) to replace lead service lines. This money will be provided to states either as grants or low-interest loans, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will work with the states to ensure the money is equitably distributed. Communities with the highest exposure level and environmental justice concerns will be prioritized. It will take several years for the EPA to distribute all of these funds.

These federal funds are essential to providing clean drinking water and protecting the health and safety of our families and communities.

While the federal government distributes these funds and municipalities inventory and replace the lead service lines, you can take action to protect yourself and your community. Use this Advocacy Packet to help protect your community's right to toxic free, safe drinking water.

Table of Contents:

- [Our Urgent Recommendations](#)
- [How to Protect Your Families Health & Safety](#)
- [Take Action to Protect Your Community](#)

Our Urgent Recommendations:

We have two urgent recommendations for municipalities, states, and the federal government regarding the Lead Service Line Replacements. Abiding by these will ensure communities' health and safety are put first.

1. FILTERED, NOT BOTTLED

All households impacted by the lead service line replacements should be provided with options for filtered water, not plastic bottles before, during and up to six months after the service line replacement.

- ★ While the lead service lines are being replaced, lead can be displaced from the pipes, worsening water quality. The use of filters is necessary so communities can utilize the public water system while ensuring toxic free water.
- ★ Households should be provided with filters that are certified to [NSF/ ANSI Standard 53](#) are able to remove lead in drinking water. If filters are not applicable, municipalities should fund other filtered water alternatives such as water buffalos, tanks, and reusable water bottles.
- ★ Single-use plastic water bottles are not the solution for clean drinking water before, during, or after the service line replacements. Single use plastics are a health threat at every stage of its existence. Let's not trade one problem for another.
 - **PRODUCTION IMPACTS:**
 - Plastics are made of [fossil fuels](#). We should not be increasing our reliance on these materials and driving ourselves deeper into the climate crisis.
 - Plastic production contaminates the air and water, harming [frontline/fenceline communities](#) and causing [asthma, cardiovascular disease, and cancer](#).
 - **CONSUMPTION IMPACTS:**
 - Plastic water bottles contain polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which [leach toxic chemicals](#) into the water they hold. Chemicals in PET are known to disrupt [hormone function](#).

- **DISPOSAL IMPACTS:**
 - Most plastic water bottles are [not recycled](#) and end up in landfills or incinerators. This plastic poses [health risks](#) to communities near these facilities.
 - Plastics break down into [microplastic particles](#). Recent research shows that microplastics can get into human [blood, lungs, placentas, feces](#), and [breastmilk](#), and could disrupt the body's [hormone system](#) and activate harmful [inflammation](#).
- ★ Bottled water doesn't have to pass the [same safety tests as tap water](#). In many cases, tap water is safer and goes through stricter testing than bottled water. We need to bolster public water systems while expanding safety through filtration.
- ★ Filters are the best point of use solution to provide safe drinking water to affected communities and avoid introducing more toxic pollutants.

2. PLASTIC-FREE PIPES

Lead services pipes should be replaced with non-toxic materials, not plastics like PVC.

- ★ PVC, CPVC, and other plastic materials cause harmful health effects.
 - Manufacturing PVC uses highly toxic mercury, PFAS, and asbestos. These are released into the environment and accumulate in our bodies, causing a range of health problems, like [cancer and lung damage](#).
 - Other toxic substances and probable carcinogens like vinyl chloride and ethylene dichloride are [released into the atmosphere during PVC production](#).
 - PVC pipes have been shown to [leach endocrine disruptors](#) and can be a source of [microplastics in water](#).
 - Another kind of common plastic-pipe, known as PEX, also [leaches neurotoxins and carcinogens](#).
- ★ The EPA must thoroughly research pipe replacement materials and promote sustainable, safe materials that do not introduce another toxic, such as plastics. States and municipalities must opt for safe materials, such as recycled copper, that do not pose additional health consequences to the impacted community.

How to Protect Your Families Health & Safety

1. CHECK IF YOUR PIPES ARE MADE OF LEAD

Your pipes may be made of lead if:

- ★ Water coming out of your tap is grayish in color
- ★ A magnet doesn't stick to your pipe
- ★ If you scratch your pipe with a coin, it leaves a shiny mark

If you believe you have lead pipes, contact your local health department for information on getting your water tested for lead.

2. IF YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE LEAD PIPES...

- ★ Contact your utility to find out when your service pipes are being replaced. Review EPA recommendations for [reducing lead exposure](#).
- ★ Take the steps under the "[Take Action to Protect Your Community](#)" section.

3. FILTER WATER FROM THE TAP BEFORE, DURING, AND FOR SIX MONTHS AFTER THE LEAD SERVICE LINE HAS BEEN REPLACED

- ★ If your water comes from lead pipes, you should begin using a filter immediately (and not wait to do so until municipalities replace service lines as this may take a long time).
- ★ After the replacement has been concluded, it's important you continue to use your filter for six months, as remnants of lead may still be present in your pipes.
- ★ The EPA has guidance on which filters are effective at filtering out lead. You can find the EPA guidance [here](#). Filters that are third party certified to ANSI / NSF standard 53 are effective at filtering out lead.

Take Action to Protect Your Community


1. SIGN THE PETITION



Join the national movement! [Sign the petition](#) to tell the EPA Administrator and local representatives: Don't replace lead pipes with plastic pollution.

2. EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

Post on social media to make sure your community knows how to keep themselves safe!

Sample social media posts below:

Suggested Graphic	Suggested Language
<p data-bbox="313 919 509 953">Link to download</p> 	<p data-bbox="873 886 984 915">Caption:</p> <p data-bbox="873 919 1398 1010">Keep our communities safe during lead pipe replacement. #FilteredNotBottled #PlasticFreePipes</p> <p data-bbox="873 1045 932 1075">Tag:</p> <p data-bbox="873 1079 1138 1169">@ your local mayor @ your state governor @EPAMichaelRegan</p> <p data-bbox="873 1209 1219 1239">Additional Suggested Hashtags:</p> <p data-bbox="873 1243 1122 1379">#ToxicFreeWater #BreakFreeFromPlastic #PlasticPollutes #GetTheLeadOut</p>

<p>Link to download</p>  <p>When it comes to clean drinking water, we shouldn't have to pick our poisons</p> <p>Plastic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Disrupts hormonesIncreases heart diseaseElevates asthma & lung cancer near productionReleases microplastics into breast milk <p>Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Impairs brain developmentIncreases heart diseaseCauses chronic kidney issuesImpacts birth health & reproduction <p>FILTERED NOT BOTTLED! plasticpollutioncoalition</p>	<p>Caption: Lead and plastics in our drinking water pose serious risks to community health. We need our Mayors to ensure our access to #ToxicFreeWater during Lead Pipe Replacement. #FilteredNotBottled #PlasticFreePipes</p> <p>Tag: @ your local mayor @ your state governor @EPAMichaelRegan</p> <p>Additional Suggested Hashtags: #ToxicFreeWater #BreakFreeFromPlastic #PlasticPollutes #GetTheLeadOut</p>
<p>Link to download</p>  <p>Protect our families during lead pipe replacements</p> <p>FILTERED NOT BOTTLED! plasticpollutioncoalition</p>	<p>Caption: To ensure our communities have access to safe drinking water – free of toxic lead and plastic – we need our local Mayors to provide filtered, not bottled water. #FilteredNotBottled</p> <p>Tag: @ your local mayor @ your state governor @EPAMichaelRegan</p> <p>Additional Suggested Hashtags: #ToxicFreeWater #BreakFreeFromPlastic #PlasticPollutes #GetTheLeadOut</p>

 <p>Protect our families during Lead pipe replacements</p> <p>FILTERED NOT BOTTLED! plasticpollutioncoalition</p>	<p>Caption: To ensure our communities have access to safe drinking water – free of toxic lead and plastic – we need our local Mayors to provide filtered, not bottled water. #FilteredNotBottled</p> <p>Tag: @ your local mayor @ your state governor @EPAMichaelRegan</p> <p>Additional Suggested Hashtags: #ToxicFreeWater #BreakFreeFromPlastic #PlasticPollutes #GetTheLeadOut</p>
--	---

3. WRITE TO YOUR MAYOR

Your mayor needs to hear from you. Let your mayor know that to best protect your community, you need Filtered Not Bottled water, and Plastic-Free Pipes.

[Click here](#) to find the sample email and your mayor's contact information, or head to our website: plasticpollutioncoalition.org/projects/filterednotbottled

4. SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF A LOCAL PAPER

Letters to the Editor of local papers are a great way to get the word out in your communities about a particular issue. These pieces are generally brief and focused. Aim for 125–175 words.

Check out [this sample letter](#) to the editor.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when writing a letter to the editor:

- ★ **Be brief.** Keep your letter short, focused, and interesting.
- ★ **Tell your story and make it personal.** Express your concern about the issue in your own way. Refer to facts, but write the letter in your own words.
- ★ **Make it local, timely, and relevant.** Your letter is more likely to be printed if it's localized and/or it is in response to something that the paper has already covered.
- ★ **Be concise and pick an angle.** Make one clear point – after you pick your point, stick to it.
- ★ **Make a call to action.** Be bold! Call on the Mayor directly.

- ★ **Refer to the decision maker you are trying to influence by name.** Then be sure to follow up with the decision maker if your letter is printed.
- ★ **Spell check.** Check for proper grammar and spelling.
- ★ **Have a friend read it.** Check to make sure your message is clear.
- ★ **Sign with your full name and include your contact information, including your mailing address.** Newspapers won't publish that address, but use it to verify you're a real person.

To submit a letter to the editor:

1. Decide which paper to submit your letter to. Newspapers want to hear from their readership so pick a local paper.
2. Look up the letter to the editor guidelines on that paper's website – every outlet will have slightly different requirements.
3. Write and submit your letter according to the instructions on their website.
4. Once your letter to the editor is published, share on social media with the hashtags [#FilteredNotBottled](#) [#PlasticFreePipes](#)

5. READ UP

Check out these additional resources to help you understand the issue.

[Filtered Not Bottled - Fact Sheet](#)

[NGO Letter to the EPA](#) - organizations in support of Filtered Not Bottled and Plastic-Free Pipes

[EPA Consumer Tool for Identifying Filters for Lead](#)

[EPA Lead Service Line Replacement Webpage](#) - explains the EPA's process for the Lead Service Line replacements

[EPA Fact Sheet: Investment in Water](#) - EPA's factsheet on the various sources of funding for protecting safe water

[White House Fact Sheet: Lead Pipe Action Plan](#) - outlines the White House's decision to fund lead pipe replacements

[Article: NRDC Lead Pipes are Widespread](#) - describes the various risks of lead pipes and estimates the total number of lead pipes in the United States