



**GREAT LAKES AND
ST. LAWRENCE**
CITIES INITIATIVE



PRESS RELEASE
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Cities Initiative’s Water Equity Commission Applauds Proposed U.S. EPA Rule Mandating Lead Service Line Replacement by Water Utilities

Chicago – December 5, 2023 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative’s Mayors Commission on Water Equity applauds the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) for last week’s announcement regarding proposed revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) that will require water utilities to replace lead service lines. After decades of insufficient action from the U.S. federal government, these proposed revisions to the LCR will expedite removal of an estimated 9.2 million lead service lines remaining in the United States, beginning to ameliorate a major health risk to communities nationwide, while also acknowledging the significant challenges faced by communities with disproportionately high concentrations of lead lines like many in the Great Lakes region.

Public health officials agree there is no safe level of exposure to lead, a neurotoxin that has been scientifically linked to developmental delays, cardiovascular diseases, and other serious health problems. There are also known societal and economic costs to lead exposure, with studies showing elevated risk levels in underserved communities and substantial financial costs for our health system.

“The Mayors Commission on Water Equity supports U.S. EPA’s proposed revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule that will speed the elimination of lead exposure for Great Lakes communities,” said Mayor Cavalier Johnson of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a Commission Co-Chair. “It is now incumbent on city leaders to continue to work with residents, homeowners, and landlords to secure community ‘buy in’ and remove any barriers locally so these beneficial regulations can be implemented as efficiently and equitably as possible – and that is exactly what we will do in Milwaukee.”

“Great Lakes states have some of the highest concentrations of lead lines in the country. We applaud the Biden-Harris administration for their commitment to supporting these basin communities as they work tirelessly to get the lead out and protect public health,” said Mayor Ryan Sorenson of Sheboygan, Wisconsin. “It is now pivotal that the federal and state governments work with local elected leaders to reduce per-pipe replacement costs and target support to the communities that need it most.”

The proposed revisions to the LCR will go into effect in October 2024. In addition to mandating the removal of lead service lines, the proposed revisions would:

- Require replacement of 100% of lead service lines in ten years, with opportunities to extend the deadline for communities with disproportionately high concentrations of lead lines
- Mandate the complete replacement lead service lines, including both public and private components.
- Lower the maximum allowable concentration of lead in tap water samples (or the “Lead Action Level”) from 15 ppb to 10 ppb and require immediate public notice and provision of water filters when samples exceed this limit.
- Increase the frequency of lead service line inventories and sampling and require communities to draft Lead Service Line Replacement Plans

The proposed revisions to the LCR build on a series of unprecedented actions taken by the Biden Administration to address lead service line replacement, including:

- The provision of \$15 billion for lead service line replacement over five years via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in November 2021
- The release of the Biden-Harris Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan in December 2021
- The launch of the Biden-Harris Get the Lead Out Partnership in January 2023
- The new Get the Lead Out Initiative (GLO) to help 200 communities remove lead service lines, launched in November of 2023.

About the Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a binational, mayor-led coalition of U.S. and Canadian cities dedicated to the environmental and socioeconomic health of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. With more than 250 member cities, the Cities Initiative is the largest municipally-driven organization in the basin focused on these issues.

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