



GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE
CITIES INITIATIVE
L'ALLIANCE DES VILLES
DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cities Initiative Applauds U.S. EPA for Historic Mandate to Expedite Lead Service Line Replacement

New rule requires most communities nationwide to remove lead service lines within 10 years, but additional federal investments are needed to bolster compliance in Great Lakes communities.

Milwaukee, WI – October 8, 2024 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative applauds the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for releasing the final Lead and Copper Rule Improvements today with a mandate requiring most communities to replace their lead service lines within 10 years. This rule is the culmination of decades of dedicated advocacy and represents a dramatic step forward to reduce the risk of lead poisoning via drinking water and promote public health and safety.

“The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements is yet another demonstration of U.S. EPA’s strong commitment to partnering with communities to reduce the risk of lead exposure via drinking water,” said Mayor Cavalier Johnson of Milwaukee, WI, U.S. Co-Chair of the Cities Initiative’s Mayors Commission on Water Equity. “Milwaukee has gone from a 60-year timeline for lead service line replacement to a 10-year timeline, as defined in the rule – and we could not have done it without the major addition of federal funding under the current administration.”

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 implications for our health system.

“The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements uphold the basic principle that everyone deserves access to safe drinking water,” stated Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard of Mount Vernon, NY, U.S. Co-Chair of the Cities Initiative’s Mayors Commission on Water Equity. “With this rule in place, it is incumbent on the U.S. federal government to match the ambition of the rule with a determined plan to fund its implementation and work with local elected leaders to get the job done.”

A significant percentage of the estimated 9.2 million lead service lines remaining in the United States are concentrated in Great Lakes communities. While the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides \$15 billion specifically for lead service line replacement, the American Water Works Association has concluded that completing replacement nationwide could cost more than \$90 billion, underscoring the need for additional federal investments in regions with the most lead service lines.

The Cities Initiative will continue to work through the Mayors Commission on Water Equity, the Great Lakes Lead Pipes Partnership and related efforts to accelerate lead service line replacement and build towards robust compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements in Great Lakes communities.

About the Cities Initiative

The Cities Initiative is a multinational coalition of local governments, led by mayors and chief elected officers, working collaboratively to safeguard the economic, environmental and social health of communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. The organization is committed to stewarding the basin's freshwater and ensuring that all residents have access to clean, safe and affordable water as the foundation for sustainable, vibrant, inclusive and resilient communities.

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