Lead and Your Drinking Water
- Planned Improvements to Water Service Lines

WE'RE MAKING SYSTEM UPGRADES
Prior to 1950, water utilities around the country commonly used lead service lines and components to connect water mains to the services lines for homes.

In the 1980s, SFPUC removed all known lead utility service lines and does not expect to find additional lead service lines in the water system. If any are found, they will be quickly removed. However, there are galvanized utility service lines that use flexible lead components to connect to the water main. These flexible lead components, commonly called goosenecks, pigtails, or whips, are approximately 3 feet in length and may contribute low levels of lead to drinking water (see diagram). Under Senate Bills 1398 and 427, the State of California required utilities to inventory and then remove these lead components. SFPUC also plans to remove all galvanized utility service lines downstream of the lead components as a part of the effort.

YOUR DRINKING WATER MEETS WATER QUALITY STANDARDS
SFPUC drinking water consistently meets all federal and state drinking water standards. This includes lead testing every 3 years under the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR). Under the LCR, lead levels must be below 15 µg/L (parts per billion, ppb) in 90% of the samples collected. All LCR results, from 2009 to 2018, are posted at sfpu.org/lead.

Despite SFPUC’s consistent compliance with LCR requirements, the overall health goal is to have no detectable lead levels in drinking water. Therefore, the State requirement to remove these components supports the overall goal of zero lead in drinking water.

UPGRADES WILL BEGIN IN 2020
San Francisco has 173,374 utility service lines. Less than 5,000 contain unknown materials. In addition, there are about 4,400 galvanized services that may have lead components. These utility service lines are being checked to confirm any potential for having a lead component. Based on field studies and statistical analysis, only a fraction are likely to have lead components (pigtails) connected to them. We currently estimate that 1,600 utility service line replacements will be needed. This includes flexible lead components and galvanized service lines that are connected to them. About 160 upgrades will be conducted per year over a 10-year period from 2020-2030. If you are impacted by this program, SFPUC will contact you approximately 2 months prior to the upgrade for your property to provide a specific schedule for your property and instructions to follow during and after the upgrade.
THE IMPACTED AREAS ARE SHOWN ON OUR MAP
Based on current SFPUC records, residents who may be affected by this program will be identified on a GIS map located at sfpu.org/lead. This map will identify all service locations that are listed as unknown or galvanized material, however, the SFPUC will conduct site inspections at these locations to verify the service line material. If the utility service line is not galvanized (e.g., copper, plastic, etc.) service line replacement will not be needed. The GIS map will be updated periodically based on these findings. Based on field studies, only a fraction of these addresses are likely to have lead components, also called pigtails.

ACTIONS TO TAKE DURING THESE UPGRADES
The upgrade can temporarily disrupt water quality at your property. All water quality impacts will be short-term. Water quality should return to normal within a month of construction. However, to mitigate any change in water quality due to construction disturbances, SFPUC will provide instructions to flush taps within your property immediately after construction, and will provide a drinking water pitcher with a 6 month supply of replacement filters at no cost.

The SFPUC also plans to remove all galvanized utility service lines downstream (between the meter and the water main), of the lead components or pigtails as a part of the effort. Residents should consider replacing any galvanized water service line connected to the property (the portion of the water service line between the meter and the building).

QUESTIONS?
SFPUC lead programs, including the LUSL Replacement Program, are summarized at sfpu.org/lead. SFPUC Water Quality Division can be contacted at (650) 652-3100 or quality@sfwater.org.

SFPUC also provides lead testing services at a discounted fee of $25 per sample. The fee is waived for participants in the Women Infant Children (WIC) program. Lead testing information can be found at sfpu.org/lead.