

REDUCTION OF LEAD IN DRINKING WATER ACT

Why have Federal Lead Regulations in Drinking Water?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that the health effects of lead are most severe for infants and children because the physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels in children than in adults. Lead can be in paint, dust, soil, air, food, and drinking water. EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead. Infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40 percent to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water. Download our [wellcare[®] information sheet](#) for more on [Lead & Well Water](#).

How has Lead in Drinking Water been controlled in previous years?

Federal efforts to control concentrations of lead in drinking water began in 1974 with the release of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The SDWA was amended in 1986, prohibiting the use of pipes, solder or flux that were not "lead free" in public water systems or plumbing in facilities providing water for human consumption. At the time "lead free" was defined as solder and flux with no more than 0.2% lead and pipes with no more than 8%.

In 1996, Congress further amended the Safe Drinking Water Act, requiring plumbing fittings and fixtures (endpoint devices) to be in compliance with voluntary lead leaching standards. The amendments also prohibited the introduction into commerce of any pipe, pipe or plumbing fitting, or fixture that is not lead free.

In 2011, Congress passed the Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act (RLDWA) revising the definition of lead free by lowering the maximum lead content of the wetted surfaces of plumbing products (such as pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings and fixtures) from 8% to a weighted average of 0.25%, establishing a statutory method for the calculation of lead content and eliminating the requirement that lead free products be in compliance with voluntary standards established in accordance with SDWA 1417(e) for leaching of lead from new plumbing fittings and fixtures.

What are the New Regulations?

On September 1, 2020, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published the final regulation, [Use of Lead Free Pipes, Fittings, Fixtures, Solder, and Flux for Drinking Water](#). The final rule requires that manufacturers or importers certify that their products meet the requirements using a consistent verification process within 3 years of the final rule publication date in the Federal Register.

Are there any exceptions to the New Regulations?

The 2011 RLDWA, created exemptions in SDWA Section 1417 from the prohibitions on the use or introduction into commerce of “pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings or fixtures, including backflow preventers, that are used exclusively for non-potable services such as manufacturing, industrial processing, irrigation, outdoor watering, or any other uses where the water is not anticipated to be used for human consumption” (SDWA 1417(a)(4)(A)). Also exempt are “toilets, bidets, urinals, fill valves, flushometer valves, tub fillers, shower valves, service saddles, or water distribution main gate valves that are 2 inches in diameter or larger” (SDWA 1417(a)(4)(B)).

The Community Fire Safety Act of 2013 further amended the SDWA Section 1417 to include fire hydrants in the list of exempted plumbing devices.

Who does the New Regulations apply to?

The regulations apply to any person who introduces these products into commerce, such as manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, distributors, re-sellers, and retailers. It also applies to any person who uses these products in the installation or repair of:

1. A public water system; or
2. A residential or nonresidential facility providing water for human consumption.

If I am a homeowner, how do I know my water system is lead-free?

It is important to use and install only clearly marked lead-free products in and around your home. If you are a homeowner and are concerned about potential lead exposure from your water system, have your water tested by a state certified water testing laboratory in your area. These lists can be found by using our [interactive map](#) or calling the wellcare® Hotline at 1-888-395-1033. Download our wellcare® information sheet for more on [Well Water Testing](#).

For More Information on Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act

Contact your licensed well contractor, local health department, state environmental agency, or the [wellcare®](#) Hotline.



Information to help maintain and protect your water well system:

[wellcare®](#) is a program of the [Water Systems Council \(WSC\)](#). WSC is the only national organization solely focused on protecting the health and water supply of an estimated 23 million households nationwide who depend on private wells (according to the U.S. EPA).

This publication is one of more than 100 [wellcare®](#) information sheets available FREE at www.watersystemscouncil.org.

Well owners and others with questions about wells and well water can contact the [wellcare®](#) Hotline at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org to fill out a contact form or chat with us live!

JOIN THE WELLCARE® WELL OWNERS NETWORK!

By joining the FREE [wellcare®](#) Well Owners Network, you will receive regular information on how to maintain your well and protect your well water.

Contact us at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org to join!