

Interim Lead Protection Through Filter Distribution

Case Example of Direct Filter Distribution in Charleston, WV

Project Overview

In accordance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI), West Virginia American Water is replacing lead service lines throughout the state and is canvassing over 86,000 service lines of unknown materials within its Kanawha Valley Regional Water System, serving Charleston, West Virginia and surrounding areas.

As part of the lead service line replacement program, West Virginia American Water distributed water pitchers and a 6-month supply of filters to all members of the community where the company had identified lead service lines. American Water is utilizing a work and asset management system to track filter distribution. This system efficiently tracks all correspondence related to filters and provides features for designating properties as multi-unit, as well as recording distribution dates and lead service line replacement timelines. The initative prioritizes schools and licensed childcare centers.

In addition to the comprehensive filter distribution program, West Virginia American Water launched a robust education campaign to notify residents of lead service line replacement, approximate replacement timelines and the importance of filter use until those line have been fully replaced.



Project Timeline

West Virginia American Water continues to replace lead and galvanized service lines through 2026. Starting in 2027 they will implement an annual goal of replacing 10% of remaining lead and GRR lines, until all lines are replaced by 2037.

Best Practices

Prioritize Vulnerable Populations and High-Risk Areas

When planning filter distribution, West Virginia American Water demonstrated that it is critical to prioritize locations that serve vulnerable populations, such as schools, licensed childcare centers, and other community facilities where children or at-risk individuals spend significant time. These populations are particularly sensitive to the effects of lead exposure, making it essential to allocate resources to these areas first.



Utilize a Comprehensive Tracking System

A well-designed tracking system is essential for the effective management of a large-scale filter distribution initiative. West Virginia American Water's utilization of a work and asset management system serves as a model, tracking all correspondence, distribution dates, and properties affected by lead service lines. Additionally, the ability to designate multi-unit properties ensures accurate record-keeping for apartments, duplexes, and other shared living spaces, reinforcing transparency, preventing duplication, and enabling seamless integration with service line replacement schedules.

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Plan for Long-Term Use

Making sure residents have enough water filters from the start—by buying in bulk and planning ahead—helps them reduce lead exposure while waiting for lead pipes to be replaced. This approach avoids the hassle of frequent reorders and ensures households always have what they need. It also builds trust by showing a commitment to longterm support. Clear instructions on how to use, replace, and maintain filters are just as important to keep them working properly. Partnering with manufacturers to get high-quality filters and set up regular restocking can make the program even stronger.



Develop a Robust Education Campaign

Public education is a cornerstone of any successful filter distribution and lead service line replacement program. As demonstrated by West Virginia American Water, an effective education campaign should use multiple communication channels to inform residents about the risks of lead exposure, the importance of using the provided filters, and the steps being taken to replace lead service lines. Effective means of communication include in-person community meetings, distribution of easy-to-understand flyers or brochures, online resources, dedicated hotlines to answer questions, and tailoring messages to specific demographics and providing language accessibility. This, combined with regular updates on progress, increases community trust in the water system and public buy-in for a capital-intensive program.