



**PROTECT KIDS
FROM LEAD**

Proactive Distribution for Lead Service Line Replacement in Vulnerable Communities

Case Example of Direct Filter Distribution in Omaha, NE

Project Overview

The Metropolitan Utilities District (M.U.D.) serves Omaha, Nebraska, and the greater area with a population of more than 600,000. M.U.D. is replacing lead service lines throughout the community while prioritizing neighborhoods with high concentrations of children in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI). Omaha has over 14,000 lead or unknown pipes in its inventory.

In the summer of 2024, M.U.D. launched its initiative to replace all lead service lines by 2034. M.U.D. is leveraging a three-pronged approach to alert residents of the program and push filtered redemption:

- 1. Detect:** Use M.U.D.'s interactive tool to identify lead service lines and check eligibility status for the replacement program.
- 2. Correct:** M.U.D. will replace lead service lines.
- 3. Protect:** Use M.U.D.-supplied pitcher filters to maintain clean drinking water.

In addition to its three-tiered approach, M.U.D. has developed a lead service line inventory tool where customers can check the composition of their service lines by simply entering their address. If the tool identifies the line as positive for lead or galvanized requiring replacement, it will guide residents in determining the next steps for the replacement program. Residents can follow progress on replacements via the Lead Replacements Projects map. Residents who have lead, galvanized requiring replacement, or lead status unknown material types are eligible to receive a pitcher certified to reduce lead, and additional filters as needed, while they wait for their home's water service line replacement. After replacement, customers will automatically receive a pitcher along with instructions on how to receive additional filters, if necessary.

M.U.D. is notifying all residents and owners of these water service lines about this project through mailed letters. After residents receive a letter, M.U.D. will test the water in their homes for free. Following replacement, residents will receive their pitcher and filter.



Project Timeline

M.U.D. replaced more than 250 lead service lines by the end of 2024. The target goal for 2025 is 650 replacements, and an additional 1,400 every year after, with a goal of finishing replacements by 2034.

Water Quality in Distribution System

M.U.D. produces stable, non-corrosive water, to minimize any potential of lead leaching from plumbing fixtures and solder. The District conducts monthly water quality tests for lead and it is NOT detected in the source (raw) water, in the finished water that leaves the water treatment plants, or in the water in the distribution system (water mains).

Best Practices



Streamline the Process

A key lesson from M.U.D.'s approach is the importance of making lead service line replacement and filter usage simple and accessible for residential customers. By clearly outlining the replacement process and enabling residents to identify their pipe type with just a few clicks, the program empowers community members to participate effortlessly. Further, by having the utility initiate projects and notify residents about potential disruptions, the burden shifts away from residents, who no longer need to contact the utility to receive their filters.



Strategic Replacement

M.U.D. is prioritizing the replacement of lead service lines and the distribution of filters in communities most at risk—those with high concentrations of lead lines and households with infants and children, who are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of lead exposure. By prioritizing vulnerable people and ensuring that households receive pitchers and filters early—before lead exposure becomes a more significant concern for the community—the risk of further lead poisoning is reduced. Similarly, working in community blocks significantly reduces the risk of disturbing lead service lines scheduled for replacement later in the process, which could otherwise expose those households to lead for an extended period.



Educate the Community

The level of community engagement and education a utility provides about lead service line replacement and filter use reflects the priority placed on the project. By employing robust educational efforts—including a dedicated website and repeated outreach through letters, videos, and interactive programs—residents are better equipped to understand the serious risks of lead poisoning and the benefits of a lead reduction program. This increases community trust in the water system and public buy-in for a capital-intensive program.



Speak in Familiar Terms

Implementing catchy slogans and straightforward program goals are easy for residents to remember and follow. By breaking the program objectives into three clear sections—Detect, Correct, and Protect—community members will gain a better understanding of the process, know their current status, and clearly see the steps needed to reach their desired outcome. Lead service line replacement is complex, but simplifying the project while maintaining trust and integrity with the community is crucial.

