

AMWA statement on EPA's Final Revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule

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Diane VanDe Hei, Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA), released the following statement today following EPA's release of its Final Revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule:

"Lead in drinking water is a complex problem that requires a cohesive solution. AMWA has been involved with EPA's Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) since its inception, and we believe EPA's Final Revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule represent improvements that will protect public health through requirements that are achievable, practical, and enforceable.

"Unlike most other drinking water contaminants that are removed at the treatment plant, lead poses a complicated challenge because it leaches into the water supply from the pipes and plumbing serving individual homes. The LCR has historically addressed this by implementing a treatment technique under the Safe Drinking Water Act that requires water systems to periodically sample for lead at the tap, and to replace a defined percentage of lead service lines if those results exceed a certain threshold.

"AMWA believes the new rule is correct in wisely avoiding unattainable mandates such as a deadline for the replacement of all lead service lines nationwide. Compliance with such a mandate would take decades, cost billions of dollars, and would divert precious ratepayer dollars away from other projects or initiatives that may deliver greater public health benefits.

"Similarly, AMWA appreciates that the new LCR closes several loopholes that allowed communities, following a lead action level exceedance, to meet prescribed lead service line replacement targets without actually removing lead pipes from the ground. For example, previously a utility could comply with a replacement mandate by replacing only the publicly owned side of a property's lead service line (while leaving the privately-owned side of the lead line untouched), or by counting a lead service line as replaced if sampling detected a low presence of lead in its water. So while the regulation theoretically required the

replacement of 7% of a community's lead service lines each year, the actual results often fell short of that goal.

"Under the new rule, only the full removal of a lead service line will count toward a community's mandated replacement rate, ensuring that replacement actually means replacement. While the new rule has received criticism for setting the minimum annual lead service line replacement rate at 3%, this is a baseline figure that may be raised by states as individual circumstances dictate. Furthermore, the new rule will improve public awareness of lead service lines through new inventory requirements and will empower individual homeowners to work with their utility to proactively eliminate all lead between the water main and the home.

"The nation has made great strides in reducing the concentration of lead in drinking water since the first LCR was implemented in 1991. EPA's Final Revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule represent even more progress toward solving the problem. We look forward to closely examining the details of the new regulation, and our members will make every effort to comply with the final rule as written."

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