



CITY OF IOWA CITY COUNCIL ACTION REPORT

November 6, 2023

Ordinance amending Title 16, entitled “Public Works”, Chapter 3, “City Utilities”, Article C, “Potable Water Use and Service”, Section 1, “Definitions”, and Section 3, “Connection to Distribution Water Main”. (Pass & Adopt)

Prepared By:	Ron Knoche, Public Works Director
Reviewed By:	Jon Durst, Water Superintendent Liz Craig, Assistant City Attorney Sara Greenwood-Hektoen, Assistant City Attorney Geoff Fruin, City Manager
Fiscal Impact:	None
Staff Recommendation:	Approval
Commission Recommendations:	N/A
Attachments:	Ordinance

Executive Summary:

Water service lines are privately owned underground water pipes that connect homes or buildings to the City’s drinking water distribution main. Some service lines are made of lead or galvanized iron that have been exposed to lead, which leads to lead deposits. The EPA has found that lead in drinking water is known to cause health problems. The proposed ordinance amendment will amend the City Code to promote the removal of lead and galvanized iron contaminated by lead from water service lines connected to the potable water system by prohibiting the repair of lead service lines and requiring full replacement of lead service lines when they develop a leak or other defect.

Background / Analysis:

Lead is naturally occurring metal and is known to be toxic. Lead and lead-containing materials exist in some Iowa City water service lines due to the materials used at the time of construction. Additionally, when water service lines are made of galvanized iron, the line may become contaminated by lead that is upstream in the water distribution system.

Iowa City’s current ordinances require property owners to maintain their water service lines at their own expense from the water meter on private property to the point of connection to the City’s drinking water distribution main. This includes repairing leaks or defects in the service line. A partial repair of a lead service line causes a disturbance in the line that has been shown to increase lead levels in drinking water.

The drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan highlighted the importance of lead abatement at the local level. In 2021 the EPA passed revisions to federal drinking water regulations that require drinking water systems to implement methods for lead service line removal and

educating residents on the sources of lead in drinking water.

In the interest of public health and to adhere to the EPA's new drinking water regulations, this proposed ordinance amendment will prohibit the repair, partial replacement, or reconnection of a lead service line to a distribution water main. Any lead service line that develops a leak or other defect must be fully replaced with lead-free materials in lieu of repair. The owner is required to report the replacement prior to commencing work, and the cost of the replacement is the responsibility of the property owner. The effective date of this ordinance amendment is January 1, 2024.

Staff is cognizant of the expense that property owners bear when replacing a lead service line, whether that replacement is voluntary or involuntary. Some homeowners' insurance policies cover this cost in certain situations. As part of the City's efforts to reduce the financial impact on property owners, staff will be presenting Council with a related agenda item at this meeting asking Council to consider authorizing an agreement with Utility Service Partners Private Label, Inc. for the marketing of service line protection plans. These plans offer property owners the opportunity to purchase optional service line repair plans from a third-party service provider. An exterior water service line plan covers the cost of the replacement of a leaking or defective lead service line up to \$8500 per service call. Additionally, at the third reading of this proposed ordinance amendment, staff will ask Council to consider a resolution authorizing the use of ARPA funds to fund a Lead Reduction Program that will offer cost-sharing assistance to help property owners pay for the replacement of lead service lines.