



## Lead Levels Worse Than Flint Unfiltered: Wisconsin's Drinking Water Crisis

Thousands of people living across the state in urban, rural, and suburban communities are being exposed to lead – a contaminant that can cause serious health problems.



*Over 80 water systems in Wisconsin have elevated lead levels.*

Recent EPA data shows more than 80 water systems in Wisconsin contain lead at higher than the recommended levels. At the same time:

- In Buffalo County 7.3 percent of children under 6 tested had elevated blood levels.
- In the City of Watertown it was 8.4 percent.
- 6 percent of Rock County's children under 6 tested had dangerous levels in their blood.
- In the City of Menasha it was 5.5 percent.
- And the list goes on and on.

Lead exposure doesn't discriminate. Wherever there's lead in contact with water, there is risk. And the risks are frightening.

- Elevated lead levels – which can accumulate via lead in drinking water and in paint – carry a host of frightening health consequences. Infants and children are the most vulnerable.
- Children with elevated blood lead levels can suffer profound and permanent health problems, including damage to brain development.
- A recent study found links between behavioral problems in school and high blood lead levels. Lead exposure produces behavior dysfunction that includes increased suspensions from school, increased violence, and decreased academic performance.

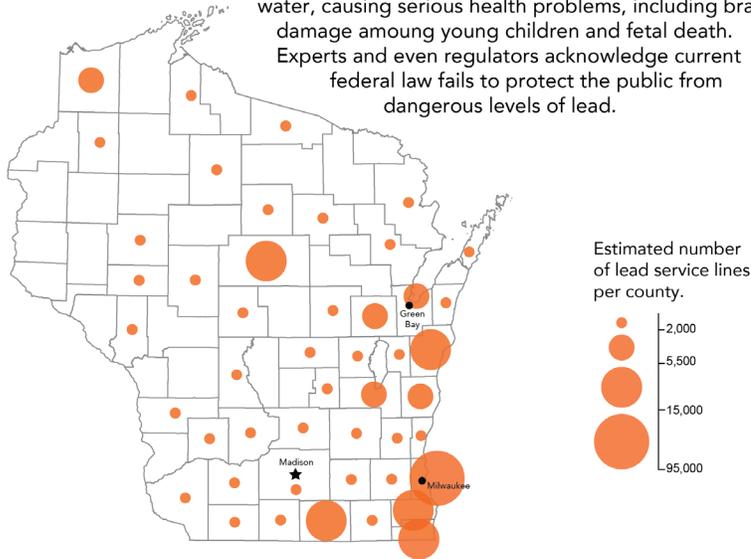
**Ask your legislator: Will you support allowing local communities to raise funds to replace lead pipes on private property (SB 48)?**

**Ask your legislator: Will you support requiring public health departments to investigate lead in water when children test positive for lead poisoning?**

Lead service lines – the pipes that run from the primary water main to a building – are prevalent across the state. Lead pipes are especially common in older homes.

## Dangerous lead pipes abundant in Wisconsin

Wisconsin has at least 176,000 so-called lead service lines carrying water to homes and businesses, according to a very limited EPA study. Such pipes can leach lead into drinking water, causing serious health problems, including brain damage among young children and fetal death. Experts and even regulators acknowledge current federal law fails to protect the public from dangerous levels of lead.



Top five Wisconsin counties with lead service lines



CREDIT: Reporting and data analysis, Silke Schmidt; map and chart, Katie Kowalsky, Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism.  
SOURCE: Miguel Del Toral, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Documentation of lead service lines in the other 25 counties could not be identified.



*There is no "safe" amount of lead in drinking water.*

*Map graphic and information courtesy of Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism, WisconsinWatch.org*

## The Solution

- Give communities the flexibility to raise funds to help replace lead laterals. Under current Public Service Commission rules, municipalities are handcuffed when trying to raise the necessary funding for replacing lead service lines. These barriers should be removed so that communities can act independently to solve their lead problems.
- Ensure blood lead levels that trigger an investigation are appropriate. Though there is no safe level of lead in our blood, the blood lead level standards in Wisconsin should protect our most vulnerable citizens.

Visit [conservationvoters.org/unfiltered](http://conservationvoters.org/unfiltered) for more information.

### Fast Fact

Of a sampling of nearly 90,000 children in the state, 4.5 percent of those tested had elevated levels of lead in their blood. (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2014)