Case Study: Eastern Massachusetts, City of Taunton

May 2024

Background

The City of Taunton's municipal drinking water system serves 62,165 customers via 16,516 service connections. While copper pipe has been preferred over lead for water lines since the 1930s, lead pipes continued to be used until the 1980s. Massachusetts adopted the Safe Drinking Water Act lead ban in 1986, and lead solder was subsequently banned. Taunton began receiving technical assistance from U.S. EPA's Get the Lead Out (GLO) Initiative in April 2024.

GLO Technical Assistance

EPA's GLO Initiative, which is funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, provides technical assistance (TA) to water utilities in identifying and planning to replace lead service lines in their water systems.

While Taunton's service line inventory in April 2024 showed no known lead service lines (or galvanized requiring replacement service lines), there were 543 public/utility side and 516 private/customer side service lines for which the material was unknown. In order to assist the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) in identifying the material of as many unknown service lines as possible, the GLO Initiative is assisting Taunton with developing a field verification plan for both the private and public side unknowns, including visual inspections of service line material at the meter. Field verification is an investigative tool to determine service line material and often involves a combination of methods, including but not limited to visual inspection of service lines entering the home. When deciding which methods to use, Taunton considered cost, utility capabilities, disturbance to the community, and impact to the homeowner. In Taunton, the City owns the water meter, while the property owners own the service line from the meter to the curb box. Gaining permission to access private property is necessary to conduct visual inspections.

To increase field verification efficiency, Taunton conducts private side service line inspections in areas where meter replacements are already occurring. Utility personnel visit adjacent locations to conduct additional private side service line visual inspections if the material type is unknown. This approach directs inspections to areas where the utility is already in the field to reduce the number of unknowns, while at the same time minimizing additional disruptions to homeowners.

More Information

For more information about the GLO Initiative or to request GLO technical assistance for your community, please visit the GLO Initiative website or fill out EPA's Water Technical Assistance Request Form.
If you have any questions, please contact WaterTA@epa.gov.