MEDFORD WATER COMMISSION

Waterlines

AUGUST 2016

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MEDFORD WATER COMMISSION

Sprinkler smarts

The Medford Water Commission supplies an average of 30 million gallons of clean drinking water each day, and up to 62 million gallons on a peak summer day. Much of this water is used for landscape irrigation.

To help you water efficiently, our Lawn Watering Infoline is updated weekly in summer. Call 541-774-2460 to listen to this week's message.

We also offer MWC customers a free on-site sprinkler system evaluation. For more details, call our conservation team at 541-774-2436 or visit medfordwater.org and click the tab for "Conservation."

Committed to:

Excellence in Water Quality
Professionalism
Customer Satisfaction
System Reliability

Contact us:

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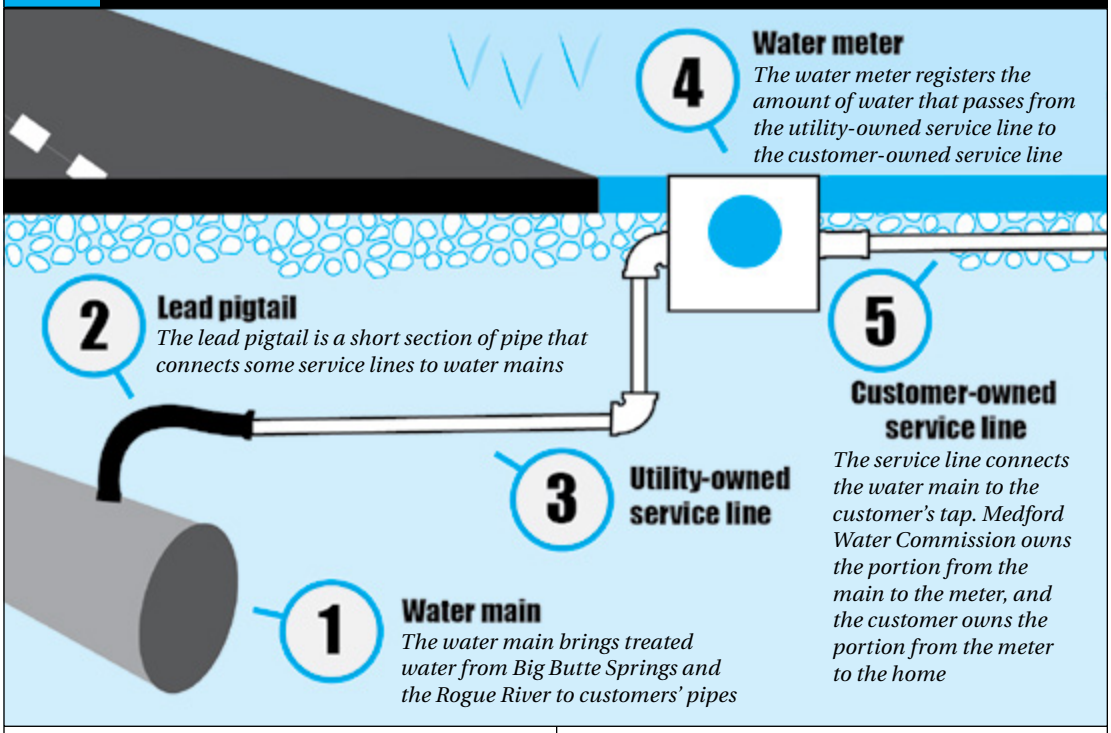
LOOKING FOR LEAD PIPES



The Medford Water Commission in June launched an extensive search to find and replace short lead pipes known as "pigtails" that have been found within our distribution system. Typically less than 2-feet long, the pigtails are flexible connector pipes used in some of the city's older service lines that deliver water from the main in the street to the customer's meter.

It's not known how many pigtails were used in Medford's system or when they were discontinued, but those that we've found in the first month of the investigation date back to 1909-1912.

For many years, the Medford Water Commission's practice has been to remove lead pigtails whenever they were found in our system. However, we don't have records of where they were installed and, since many have been removed, it's challenging to determine where they remain in our system.

What is Medford Water Commission doing to find the lead pigtails?

While we don't know exactly where any pigtails are within our system, we do have some clues based on years of experience in the field. First, we know the age of our water mains. We also know that the pigtails are very old, and it's unlikely they were used in our system after World War II. We've focused our search on mains older than 1946.

As the first step, our service crews are surveying all meter boxes on water mains older than 1946 – approximately 5,000 services – to determine whether the service line is galvanized iron or copper. While we can't see lead pigtails at the meter box, experience indicates galvanized service lines have the greatest likelihood of being connected to a pigtail, so those services are our

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LOOKING FOR LEAD

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first priority for digging to confirm whether a pigtail exists, then removing any pigtails that are found.

As of July 20, our press date, crews had surveyed 2,725 meter boxes and we are tracking locations that need further investigation. Of the 31 locations where we have dug in the street to look at the pipes, 10 pigtails have been found. (Current numbers are available on our website.) When a pigtail is found, the Commission offers to test the customer's water for lead and then replaces the service line. Follow-up testing is offered once the pigtail is removed.

Who does this affect?

Only customers with services on older water mains within Medford's historic core are within the search area for lead pigtails. However, all customers should be aware that there may be sources of lead within your home or office plumbing, including lead solder and some brass fixtures. Also be aware that lead-based paint, banned from household use in 1978, is still the state's most common source of lead exposure, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Waterlines

is a quarterly publication of the

Medford Water Commission

Established in 1922 and governed by the Board of Water Commissioners.

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Serving these cities:

Medford, Ashland, Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Talent

Also serving:

White City area and the following water districts: Elk City and Charlotte Ann

What can consumers do?

There are many steps you can take to reduce your exposure to lead in drinking water:

• **Run your water to flush out lead.** If water has not been used for several hours, run taps for approximately 2 minutes, or until it becomes as cold as it will get, before cooking or drinking. (See sidebar for more.)

• **Periodically remove and clean the faucet screen/aerator.** Occassional cleaning will remove particles that can become trapped in your faucet aerator.

• **Always use cold water for cooking and drinking.** Lead dissolves more easily into hot water, so don't use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula, or for cooking or drinking.

• **Consider buying low-lead faucets.** As of January 2014, drinking faucets are required to contain less than 0.25% lead, which is termed "lead-free."

• **Consider investing in a filter.** Before you buy, confirm whether the filter reduces lead – not all filters do. Remember that bacteria and other contaminants can collect in filters if not properly maintained, making water quality worse, not better. For water filter performance standards, visit nsf.org or contact the National Safety Foundation at 1-800-673-8010.

• **Consider having your water tested.** Testing your water is the only way to confirm if lead is present. If you're concerned that your home plumbing may contain lead pipes or if you see signs of corrosion, consider having your water tested by a state-certified laboratory.

A word about corrosion

Medford's soft water is considered corrosive, which means it can leach metals from pipes, particularly when sitting stagnant for periods of time. The Commission is in the early stages of initiating a corrosion study to determine whether any additional treatment is needed. The study is expected take up to two years.

FLUSHING 101

How long should I flush?

The goal is to bring in fresh water from the main rather than drink water that's been sitting idle for several hours in your household pipes or service line. The best way to rid the pipes of water that may contain lead or other metals is to let the cold water run until you feel that it is as cold as it will get.

Homes that are further from the main will need to be flushed longer than those that sit close to the street, but you should always run the water for at least 60 seconds.

For a better calculation, estimate 0.4 gallons for every 10 feet of pipe between your faucet and the main. If your faucet is 100 feet from the main, flush at least 4 gallons, or 2 minutes at a kitchen sink with a 2-gallon-per-minute aerator. If you've already taken a shower, run the sprinklers or flushed the toilet, you can flush less.

Aren't we supposed to save water?

Some customers have asked whether flushing water conflicts with our conservation philosophy. Our answer: No. While we always want to avoid wasting water, our highest priority is assuring high quality drinking water.

Is the Commission advising flushing to sell more water?

No. At a cost of less than $1 per 1,000 gallons, flushing your lines before getting a drink is unlikely to make much difference to your monthly water bill. However, if you're interested in saving money and water, we offer great conservation tips at www.medfordwater.org.

Also, the water you run from drinking taps does not have to be wasted. You can use this water for cleaning or watering plants. Also, keep a pitcher of water in the fridge so you don't have to flush as often, and fill your coffee pot before bed so it will be ready to go in the morning without flushing the tap.