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Contact: Porsha Ari Parson, Publicist
(716) 218-9241
Porsha.parson@ariparsonpr.com

Buffalo Water Releases First Public-Facing Service Line Inventory Map One Year Ahead of Schedule

Buffalo Water urges City residents to help build inventory map by taking important online survey

BUFFALO, NY — Today, Buffalo Water announced the early release of its first public-facing residential service line inventory map for the City of Buffalo, one of the first cities in the nation to deploy this cutting-edge initiative that will help residents identify potential lead service lines (LSL) in their neighborhoods. The map comes one year ahead of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) requirement and is accessible to Buffalo Water customers through an online platform called *Get Water Wise Buffalo*. The announcement happened at the Colonel Ward Pumping Station, with Buffalo Water Chair and Buffalo Sewer Authority General Manager OJ McFoy, Mayor Byron Brown, and representatives from Veolia, 120 Water, Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Citizen Action of New York, and Open Buffalo.

Buffalo Water Board Chair Oluwole “OJ” McFoy said, “Buffalo Water is improving transparent communication in our operations. Releasing Buffalo’s first public-facing service line inventory map one year ahead of the EPA requirement is significant to informing Buffalo Water customers so they can take the recommended action that helps identify homes with lead service lines. Buffalo Water is actively replacing lead service lines in the City. I want to thank Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Open Buffalo, and Citizen Action of New York for helping share information about our Replace Old Lead Lines (ROLL) program with our community and advocating and supporting an early release of the map. We urge Buffalo homeowners and renters to take the online service line survey at getwaterwisebuffalo.org.”

Last month, The EPA proposed a new rule that requires lead service lines across the country to be replaced within 10 years. The primary objective of the service line inventory map is to identify neighborhoods or homes with lead material in their drinking water pipes, which are called service lines. With heightened awareness around the health risks associated with lead in homes, Buffalo Water’s newly released map will inform City of Buffalo residents about the presence of lead service lines in their neighborhoods. The service line inventory map will be a living document, continuously updated and improved as the Lead Service Line Replacement project progresses, ensuring that residents can access the most up-to-date information.

Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown said, “Buffalo residents continue to enjoy some of the safest drinking water anywhere, and today we are one of the first cities in the nation to deploy a cutting-edge initiative that will help residents identify lead service lines in homes. I thank

Buffalo Water, Veolia, 120 Water, Blue Conduit, Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Citizen Action and Open Buffalo for their commitment to the *Get Water Wise Buffalo* initiative as we continue to invest heavily in programs that safeguard children from being poisoned by lead. By sharing information about where lead pipes are located, we will help residents take the steps necessary to protect themselves from lead exposure.”

Key Highlights of Buffalo's Lead Service Line Inventory Map:

1. **Identification of Lead Service Line Areas:** The map identifies neighborhoods where lead service lines are known to exist and areas where the service line material is still unknown. This information is crucial for lead service line replacement projects that will occur in the City of Buffalo.
2. **Continuous Updates:** Buffalo Water is committed to transparency and will regularly update the map as more information becomes available during the Lead Service Line Replacement project.
3. **Actionable Steps:** Currently, there are several homes and neighborhoods where the service line material is unknown. Buffalo Water needs all Buffalo residents, regardless of whether they're homeowners or renters, to take the service line survey, which is available online at [Getwaterwisebuffalo.org](https://www.getwaterwisebuffalo.org). Participation is essential in identifying homes with lead service lines. The more surveys Buffalo Water receives, the better they can accurately improve and update the service line inventory map. Residents are also encouraged to participate in the 311 Tap-Sampling program. More information is available at [Getwaterwisebuffalo.org](https://www.getwaterwisebuffalo.org).
4. **Lead Service Line Replacement Progress:** Buffalo Water will share updates on the number of lead service lines replaced in Buffalo to inform the community about the project's progress and success.

To develop the map, Buffalo Water managing company Veolia and digital water company 120Water worked alongside Buffalo Water and GHD to identify and compile current and historical records to create the Lead Service Line Inventory (LSLI), a requirement recently assigned by the EPA. 120Water is the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) database of record for Buffalo Water. The organization has engaged directly with the community for lead sampling, communication, and public outreach for capital replacement work. Earlier this year, 120Water also released the public-wide service line survey to identify all services in the City of Buffalo.

Project Manager for Veolia North America's Buffalo operations David Hill said, "Veolia is honored to support Buffalo Water's commitment to maintaining optimal water quality throughout the community. The new public-facing lead service line inventory map is an informative dashboard that customers can use to identify their service line material. The service line survey will urge customers that have unknown service line material to self-identify the interior portion of their service line and report the results. This will continue to improve the accuracy of Buffalo Water's inventory map."

Director of Client Experience Logan Turner said, "On behalf of 120Water and in collaboration with Veolia North America, GHD and the City of Buffalo, we are extremely pleased to announce the release of the Service Line Inventory for the City of Buffalo. The release of this comprehensive map is a vital step towards safeguarding the health and well-being of city residents. The map offers a detailed overview showing both the outside and inside portions of the service and also creates an opportunity for the residents of the city to help us further identify

potential lead service lines. This is a major step forward in the continuous proactive effort of identifying and removing lead service lines in the City of Buffalo.”

As part of the national initiative to remove lead from homes, Buffalo Water has partnered with community groups Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Open Buffalo, and Citizen Action of New York to bring awareness to Buffalo communities about the lead service line replacement project. The three community groups have collaborated as part of a grant funded by Manhattan-based organization WE ACT for Environmental Justice. The grant calls for the organizations to work together to help educate local communities about the health concerns associated with lead and engage with decision-makers to advocate for equitable service line replacement. In addition, the groups work with City LSL program leads, Buffalo Water, water analytics company Blue Conduit, and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to help develop technology that shares information about LSLs in the City of Buffalo.

Executive Director of Heart of the City Neighborhoods Stephanie Simeon said, “It is rare when community-based organizations have an opportunity to collaborate with both a municipality and a major utility to educate, engage, and empower the greater Buffalo community. The early release of the new public-facing lead service line inventory map benefits the Buffalo community. This database will continue to grow, especially with help from community members, who are encouraged to participate in the online survey. If we all take part in this initiative, it will help Buffalo Water identify the locations of lead service lines in the city.”

Executive Director of Open Buffalo Franchelle Parker said, "There should be no higher priority than protecting the well-being and future of our young people. Families across Buffalo are now empowered with greater insight into the safety of our drinking water. Open Buffalo eagerly looks forward to engaging community members in understanding the functionality and significance of the newly released maps."

Community Organizer for Citizen Action of New York Niasha Hamilton said, “I’ve seen firsthand the concern and impact of lead exposure in our communities. The Buffalo Water Service Line Map will be an invaluable resource to both renters and homeowners throughout the City. Buffalo’s Municipalities and partners have the opportunity to build transparency by educating them on what’s in and around their homes and helping them take steps to prevent such exposure and mitigate the effects. This is a meaningful move in the right direction that will ultimately lead to the removal and replacement of all lead pipes. We look forward to more families taking the mapping survey, and to continued collaboration with Buffalo Water and other partners in supporting our communities.”

Buffalo Water has been actively identifying homes with LSLs through the Replace Old Lead Lines (ROLL) program, the Capital Improvement program, which replaces thousands of feet of watermains each year, and the 311 Tap Sampling Program. Buffalo Water has also utilized Get Water Wise Buffalo, an affordable water bill assistance initiative, to actively engage the community and share information about Buffalo's Lead Service Line Replacement project. As of November 30, 2023, Buffalo Water has replaced 1,965 lead service lines with construction on watermains and service line replacements happening daily.

Lead material is no longer permitted for use in water service lines. Buffalo Water uses ductile iron for its watermains, but many private homes in Buffalo were constructed with lead service lines connected to City watermains. As a result of historic construction practices, many homes throughout the city still have LSLs supplying water into the homes. However, Buffalo Water uses corrosion control treatment to combat the risks associated with LSLs. The treatment creates a protective barrier along the inside walls of the LSLs, largely preventing lead from entering the water. Although this practice is efficient, some homes could still test positive for lead in water due to LSL disturbance or lead plumbing inside the home. Flushing water lines is recommended for homes with LSLs and lead plumbing.

Buffalo Water urges anyone concerned about lead in their drinking water to contact them immediately. In addition, they suggest the following actions that a person may take, separately or in combination.

- **Have your water tested.** Contact your water utility to have your water tested and to learn more about the lead levels in your drinking water.
- **Learn if you have a lead service line.** Contact your water utility or a licensed plumber to determine if the pipe that connects your home to the water main (called a service line) is made from lead.
- **Run your water.** Before drinking, flush your home's pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. The amount of time to run the water will depend on whether your home has a lead service line or not, and the length of the lead service line. Residents should contact their water utility for recommendations about flushing times in their community.
- **Learn about construction in your neighborhood.** Be aware of any construction or maintenance work that could disturb your lead service line. Construction may cause more lead to be released from a lead service line.
- **Use cold water.** Use only cold water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula. Remember, boiling water does not remove lead from water.
- **Clean your aerator.** Regularly clean your faucet's screen (also known as an aerator). Sediment, debris, and lead particles can collect in your aerator. If lead particles are caught in the aerator, lead can get into your water.
- **Use your filter properly.** If you use a filter, make sure you use a filter certified to remove lead. Read the directions to learn how to properly install and use your cartridge and when to replace it. Using the cartridge after it has expired can make it less effective at removing lead. Do not run hot water through the filter.

The list is also recommended by the EPA and is not intended to be exhaustive or to imply that all actions equally reduce lead from drinking water.

For more information and to access the lead service line map, please visit getwaterwisebuffalo.org. To view a demonstration of the map and survey click [here](#).

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About Get Water Wise Buffalo: Get Water Wise Buffalo is an online resource that provides Buffalo Water customers with affordable water bill assistance and shares information about Buffalo's lead service line replacement project. Get Water Wise Buffalo connects Buffalo Water customers to an application accessible through their website that can connect them with programs and grants to help lower water bills if eligible or set them up with a suitable payment plan if they are in arrears. In addition, Get Water Wise Buffalo shares important information about what residents can do to help Buffalo Water identify homes and neighborhoods with old service lines made from lead material and what they should do if they suspect lead material has entered the water in their homes. Through the website they can access the To learn more, visit getwaterwisebuffalo.org.