How to Identify a Lead Service Pipe.

Through the early 1900's, lead pipes were commonly used for interior plumbing. Until the 1940's lead piping was used for service lines connecting the building to street water mains. In the 1930's, copper and galvanized steel pipes replaced lead pipes in most residential plumbing. This handout will help you to identify if your building is served water through a lead service line.

Tools needed:

- Flathead Screwdriver
- Refrigerator Magnet

Locate the water service line coming into the basement. This is typically a metal pipe in the basement along the street side of the building that penetrates the building from the floor or the wall and is connected to the water main in the street. This is usually near a wash tub, laundry connection, or water heater.

Identify the type of pipe coming into the building through the basement wall or floor as either plastic, copper, galvanized steel, or lead. If unable to visually determine the material type, hold a magnet against the pipe.

If the magnet sticks to the pipe, the material is galvanized steel and the material is identified. If the magnet does not stick, gently scratch the pipe surface with the screwdriver and use the characteristics below to help determine the material type.

COPPER – Scraping a copper pipe will reveal a shiny "new penny" color and will not attract a magnet.

GALVANIZED IRON – Scraping a galvanized iron pipe will reveal a silver/white color and will attract a magnet.

LEAD – Scraping a lead pipe will reveal a shiny silver/ white color and will not attract a magnet. Lead pipe is softer and will scratch easily.

If you identify your water service pipe material as lead, please contact SPU at 837-5500. SPU is tracking lead service pipes in Sun Prairie.

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