

Sheboygan's Lead Water Service Lateral Replacement Program

By Joe Trueblood, Sheboygan Water Utility

Although the Water Utility has always encouraged the replacement of private lead water service laterals, WDNR made the work easier this year by providing financial incentives. During 2016, the Utility became one of the first to qualify for WDNR grant monies to replace old laterals. Following the events of Flint, Michigan, WDNR moved to make financial resources available, and the Utility qualified for \$335,000 in grants for both 2017 and 2018. The funds can be used for up to three years after issuance.

There is no detectable lead in water leaving the water treatment plant at 72 Park Avenue. Since the early 1990's, the Utility has used corrosion control phosphates to minimize lead leaching into drinking water from old lead laterals and interior plumbing. All test results since then have complied with WDNR and EPA standards for lead.

By late 2016, the Utility had completed a draft of its program, which had to comply with WDNR requirements. As with nearly every city, Sheboygan has a large number of private lead water laterals in its older sections. With limited funds, the Utility's challenge was to focus the program to make the most impact.

The Utility first reviewed plumbing records for public and private schools and daycares. Only one public school still had an active lead service lateral, and less than 10 licensed daycares had active lead service laterals. Under WDNR's program, these facilities qualified for complete reimbursement of all costs to replace the lead laterals. By mid-year of 2017, nearly all of these projects were completed and reimbursed.

The Utility also performed outreach and education with local plumbing companies. Compliance with the program puts new requirements on the plumbers, and only a few have chosen to participate. By state law, Water Utility staff is prohibited from doing construction work on private property, such as replacing old laterals.

The Utility focused the bulk of the grant money on water main replacement projects where construction would disrupt the old water laterals. This physical disruption can release lead. The program used grant money to pay the replacement cost from the curb shut-off valve to the water meter. As in prior projects, the property owner was assessed for the replacement cost from curb stop to water main. The first large project was Broadway, from South 7th Street to South 13th Street. On this project, a local plumbing contractor replaced 48 lead water laterals.

While not forcing customers to replace private service laterals, the Utility's program provides significant financial incentive. Typical replacement costs range from \$4,000-\$6,000 depending on local conditions. The Utility set a maximum reimbursement amount of \$2,500. This amount applies to situations including a leaky lead water lateral, an inoperable curb stop, a lead test result exceeding the action limit of 15.0 ppb, physical disruption of lead water laterals due to construction, and high venous blood test in a minor. In all cases, the entire lead lateral must be

replaced in order to qualify. So far, the program does not extend to property owners who simply choose to replace their old service lateral.

To date, the program has resulted in replacement of 70 private lead water service laterals. More will take place in 2018. Meanwhile, the Utility continues to evaluate alternative technologies such as epoxy-coating old laterals.

For more information on the program and ways to minimize exposure to lead, please refer to the Utility's website, www.sheboyganwater.org.