



## **USVI JOINT INFORMATION CENTER**

### **St. Croix Water – Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. How would I know if there is lead in my water?**

You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. The best way to know your risk of exposure to lead in drinking water is to identify the potential sources of lead in your service line and household plumbing.

#### **2. How many WAPA accounts are affected?**

While we know that not all parts of the potable water distribution system are showing lead levels above recommended action levels, WAPA has identified approximately 3,400 homes and businesses that may be affected. This number may change depending on the results of further sampling and exploratory digging.

#### **3. Will the government be supplying clean drinking water to homes and/or businesses that are affected? What form will the supply take – hauling to cisterns? Individual bottles?**

Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority, in close coordination with multiple central government agencies including Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Department of Health, and Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, is still in the process of identifying specific customers and usage data to determine the best way to supply affected customers with access to clean drinking water. This may result in a credit on customers' water bills or distribution of home water filters. As soon as the determination has been made, that information will be disseminated.

#### **4. Where can individuals go to be tested for lead exposure? Is there an age limit? Is it free?**

The Department of Health hotlines are available for residents to call from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday with health concerns related to testing for lead. Individuals may call 340-712-6299 or 340-776-1519.

On Oct. 30th, the VI Department of Health launched an initiative to conduct free blood lead level testing for up to 1,000 children aged zero to six years old and pregnant women on the

island of St. Croix. Children zero to six years old and pregnant women are considered most at-risk with lead exposure.

For a child to be tested, a parent or guardian must register their child and give consent at our online portal [Lead Testing Gateway | Beacon USVI](#).

The department's Epidemiology team will test from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, at the Community Health van in the parking lot adjacent to the department's modulars in Estate Richmond.

The St. Croix Clinical Laboratory at the Sunny Isles Medical Center on St. Croix is offering lead testing to all other members of the community.

## **5. How would I know if I have lead in my body or have lead poisoning?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, if you think that you or your child has been exposed to lead in water, contact your health care provider. Most children and adults who are exposed to lead have no symptoms. The best way to tell if you or your child has been exposed is with a blood lead test. Your health care provider can help you decide whether a blood lead test is needed and can also recommend appropriate follow-up actions if you or your child has been exposed. As levels of lead in the blood increase, adverse effects from lead may also increase.

You may also call the Department of Health hotlines at 340-712-6299 or 340-776-1519, Monday through Friday, from 8a.m. to 5p.m.

## **6. Will the government provide point-of-use lead detection kits?**

The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority, in coordination with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, will be providing point-of-use lead detection kits as soon as they are available on-island. Distribution information will be published as soon as it is available.

## **7. Does boiling water remove lead?**

Boiling water does not remove lead and is NOT recommended as a means for removing lead from drinking water.

## **8. Will my water filter remove lead?**

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, point of use, or POU, drinking water filters are used to remove impurities from water at the point that it is actually being used. Although there are others, the POU filters covered in this document are those used in filtration systems that are attached directly to water faucets, inserted into refrigerators for water dispensers and ice makers, or inserted into water pitchers and bottles. There is no mandatory federal requirement for the use of POU drinking water filters or for testing or third-party certification under the Safe Drinking Water Act. However, consumers can increase their level of confidence

by purchasing filters that have been tested by an accredited third-party certification body or bodies for lead reduction and particulate reduction (Class I) capabilities against both NSF/ANSI Standards 42 and 53. This tool provides the certification bodies' approved marks and the text that indicates a filter has been certified for lead reduction capabilities.

Additional information on how to determine which water filter may be right for your use can be found [here: A Consumer Tool for Identifying Point of Use \(POU\) Drinking Water Filters Certified to Reduce Lead \(epa.gov\)](#)

### **9. If the water is brown does that mean it contains lead?**

No. The brown/red water issue is a separate water issue. Having brown/red water at your tap does not automatically mean that there are also elevated levels of lead BUT it is possible. To determine if your water source is in the zone(s) considered most likely to have elevated lead levels, please call the DPNR hotline at 340-514-3666, Monday through Friday, from 8a.m. to 5p.m.

### **10. Can I shower in lead-contaminated water?**

Yes. You may shower in this water. We recommend trying to avoid ingesting any of the shower water. That means, if possible, to avoid splashing water in the mouth.

### **11. Where can I find more information about lead in water?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides information on lead in water, lead poisoning and lead exposure [here: Lead in Drinking Water | Sources of Lead | CDC](#)

### **12. If I'm not in an area of concern, can I drink or cook with my potable water?**

No. Additional sampling and exploratory digging are being conducted across the island to identify the source of lead. Until WAPA has tested the water in your building or neighborhood and the source of lead contamination has been identified, the no consumption advisory remains in place for the entire island.

### **13. Do I still have to pay my WAPA water bill? Will I receive a credit?**

Yes. You still have to pay your WAPA bill. WAPA and the central government are going to issue credits to accounts that fall within certain parameters. When the criteria are determined, customers will be notified, and public notice will be released. In the meantime, customers should continue to pay their WAPA bills as usual.

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