

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

You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. The best ways to know your risk of exposure is to (1) identify the potential sources of lead in your service line and your household plumbing and (2) to speak with your landlord or property manager about your concerns.

2. How many WAPA accounts are affected?

In September 2023, based on sampling at distribution meters, it appeared that approximately 2100 customers *may* have been impacted. However, in November 2023, subsequent sampling data analyzed by EPA experts indicated levels of lead at household taps are far lower than those found at the distribution meters. Two (2) of the samples showed above the lead action levels, likely from plumbing or faucets in homes. One sample above the action level had been stagnant for approximately four (4) days.

3. Will the government be supplying clean drinking water to homes and/or businesses that are affected?

Based on very early sampling results, a no drinking water advisory was issued for St. Croix while awaiting the results of EPA's sequential sampling report. This prompted WAPA to issue clean drinking water vouchers valued at \$100 to eligible customers redeemable with local vendors until February 19, 2024. Eligibility was determined originally by identifying possible areas of concern. The distribution was led by the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority, in close coordination with multiple central government agencies, including Office of the Governor, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Department of Health, Department of Human Services and Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, VITEMA, FEMA, Virgin Islands Police Department, Bureau of Information Technology and the V.I. National Guard.

4. Will the government provide point-of-use lead filters?

In an abundance of caution, sink and pitcher filters were funded by the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) Safe Drinking Water Fund for distribution in mid-January 2024 to eligible customers. Filters are still available to eligible customers, by visiting WAPA's Sunny Isle Business Office from February 5-9, 5-6pm. Filter distribution will continue during regular business hours beginning on February 12. Eligibility is similar to that used for water voucher distribution. However, customers in Frederiksted town are also now eligible.

5. Will my water filter remove lead?

According to the EPA, 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 distributed by WAPA are those used in filtration systems that are attached directly to water faucets, or inserted into water pitchers and bottles. This can be used by customers of the public water system or at homes and businesses with cisterns. 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. Additional information on how to determine which water filter may be right for your use can be found here: https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-12/documents/consumer_tool_for_identifying_drinking_water_filters_certified_to_reduce_lead.pdf

6. Does boiling water remove lead?

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

7. 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.

8. Is the no drinking advisory, implemented by the Virgin Islands Government under a State of Emergency in October 2023, still in effect?

No. The no drinking advisory under the State of Emergency was lifted on January 22, 2024, based on results from the EPA's sequential sampling study. The subsequent investigations, applying the correct testing methods, have dismissed initial concerns. Direct household faucet sampling has provided accurate and reassuring data. Read more on www.cleanwaterusvi.com.

9. 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.

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

On Oct. 30, 2023, the VI Department of Health launched *Safe Haven: A Lead-Free Family Initiative* to conduct free blood lead level testing to establish a baseline for gathering future data. Over 1400 children aged zero to six years old, and pregnant women on the island of St. Croix, have been tested. 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 DOH's online portal: <https://health.usvi.care/pediatric-lead-testing>

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 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. For more information on WAPA's effort to improve water quality, please visit www.cleanwaterusvi.com or call the DPNR hotline at 340-514-3666, Monday through Friday, from 8a.m. to 5p.m. for information on water sampling.

13. What is WAPA doing to address the brown/red water in several locations on St. Croix.

WAPA has been taking proactive steps in its mission to address the brown/red water issue in St. Croix's potable water system over the last several years. Water line replacement has been underway, and to date, the system has been rehabilitated in Estate Campo Rico, and in Christiansted and Frederiksted towns. Work also began in early 2023 in Estate Clifton Hill. Work will begin in Hannah's Rest in Q1 2024, all funded by the EPA's Drinking Water Capital Improvement Fund. With FEMA funding of up to \$1.5B, it is anticipated that the island's entire public water system will be fully replaced. The Authority is also planning a similar initiative for St. Thomas and St. John.