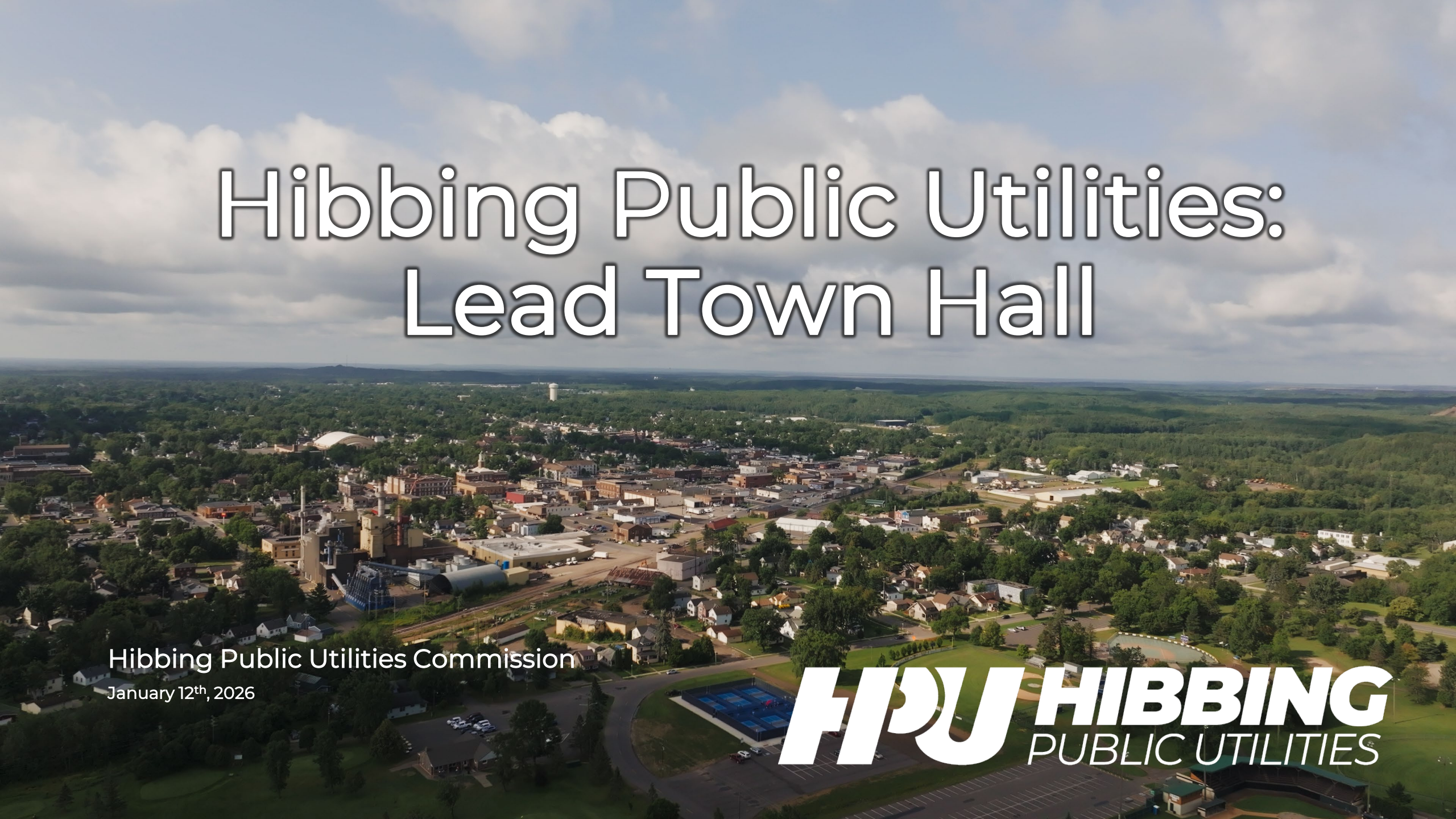
Hibbing Public Utilities: Lead Town Hall



Hibbing Public Utilities Commission

January 12th, 2026

HPU HIBBING PUBLIC UTILITIES

PRESENTERS

- Health Impacts & Common Sources of Lead

- Annual Lead Testing Process
- Statewide Assessment
- Reducing personal exposure risk

- Get the Lead Out Projects
- Need for support

Meeting Goals

1. **Inform residents** about Lead Testing Results
2. **Provide education** to reduce personal exposure risk
3. **Present HPU's system-wide response**
4. **Prepare residents** to support HPU's projects & funding asks

Health Risks of Lead & Importance of Prevention

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
St. Louis County, MN

Agenda

- Introduction
- How Lead Enters the Body
- Who is Most Vulnerable
- Health Effects on Other Age Groups
- Importance of Prevention

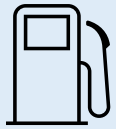
Introduction: What is Lead? Where Can it be Found?

What is Lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring element found in small amounts in the earth's crust favored for its durability and resistance to wear from the elements.

Where is it Found?

Lead can be found in all parts of our environment – the air, the soil, the water, and even inside our homes. Much of our exposure comes from human activities including the use of:



fossil fuels including past use of leaded gasoline

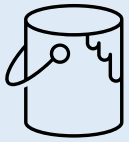
pipes and plumbing materials

naturally found in soil or contaminated soil

some types of industrial facilities

old or imported ceramics

imported cosmetics and ceremonial cosmetics



past use of lead-based paint in homes

lead bullets and fishing lures

How Does Lead Enter the Body?

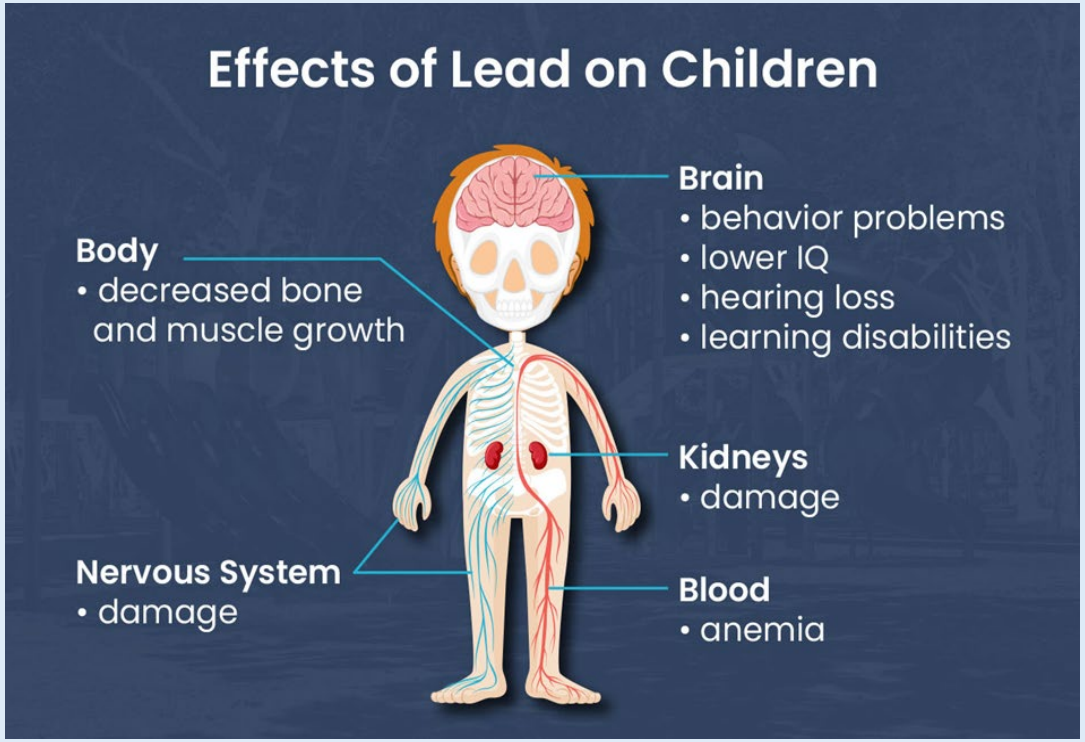
Lead can enter the body by being inhaled such as in certain industrial settings or welding shops.
Lead can be digested through contaminated foods, water, or by touching contaminated surfaces and then eating.

- Lead is inhaled or ingested and then absorbed by the bloodstream.
- Lead is then distributed throughout the body mostly being absorbed into the bones and teeth.
- Lead can also be deposited into the body's soft tissues like the brain, lungs, kidneys, heart, and spleen.

Who is Most Vulnerable?

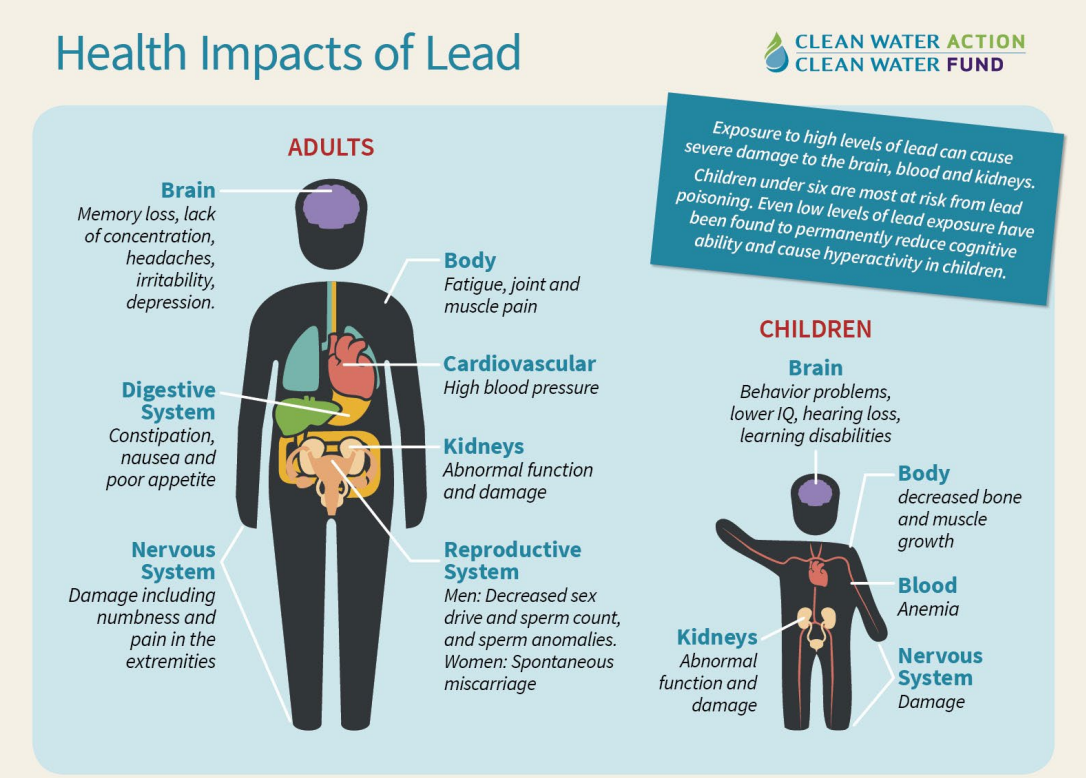
1. Children under 6 years old
2. Pregnant or Breastfeeding persons
3. Low-income families
4. Children living in homes built before 1978

Due to their developing brains, children absorb lead at much higher rates than adults. Thus, putting them at greater risk of health effects from lead toxicity.



What to Know About Lead in a Home | City of Cleveland Ohio

Lead's Effects on the Adolescent, Adult & Aging Populations



Lead and Drinking Water | Clean Water Action

Lead toxicity in adolescence is known to cause decreased concentration and interference with judgement and decision-making.

Lead toxicity in the adult and aging populations increases risk for heart attack and stroke

Is there an Acceptable Level of Lead which can be Safe?

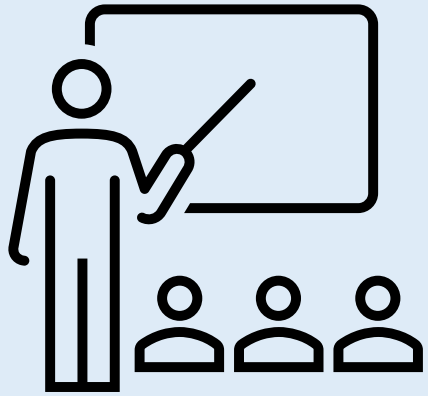
There is **NO** safe amount of lead.

The effects from lead are irreversible. The best way to treat lead toxicity is to **PREVENT IT**

https://youtube.com/shorts/nv8gct46KeE?si=IECwbFD42BiaCqAJ

Final tips & takeaways

- Lead can be found in many areas of the home including pealed chipped paint and old water pipes.
    - Assess which areas may be putting you at risk if your house was built before 1978 or if your home has been identified as having lead plumbing or sauntering.
- Lead's effects are systemic (effects the whole body) and irreversible
    - Children and pregnant/breastfeeding persons are most at risk
- The best way to treat Lead Toxicity is to prevent it from happening
    - Identify sources of lead and get the lead out!



Thank you

Ashton Martin, RN-BSN, PHN
Pronouns: She/Her/Hers
Public Health and Human Services
Office: 218-471-7290 **Fax:** 218-471-7601
Government Services Center, 201 S 3rd Ave, Virginia, MN 55792
martina@stlouiscountymn.gov
www.stlouiscountymn.gov
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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
St. Louis County, MN

Hibbing Lead Action Level Exceedance

Hannah Mendez | Lead & Copper Compliance Engineer


DWP
Mission
To ensure that **everyone**, **everywhere** in Minnesota has **safe** and **sufficient** drinking water.

What We Do

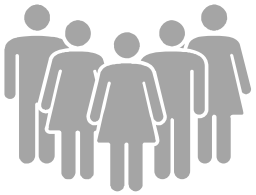
- **Implement** the Safe Drinking Water Act in Minnesot
- **Protect** sources of drinking water
- **Regulate** well location and construction
- **Test** and **inspect** public water systems
- **Educate** private well users
- **Train** water operators and well contractors
- **Track** and **prevent** waterborne disease outbreaks
- **Certify** water-testing laboratories
- **Assess** health risks of contaminants with new concern

Resources

Funding Sources

- General Fund
- Safe Drinking Water Fee
- Clean Water Fund
- Federal dollars

Expertise at MDH



- Public health sanitarians
- Planners
- Hydrologists
- Toxicologists
- Communicators
- Lab technicians
- Engineers

How does lead get into drinking water?

- Lead in drinking water comes from pipe material that contains lead.
- Water interacts with metal pipe surfaces and absorb material from the pipe through a process called **corrosion**.
- Certain characteristics of the water impact how corrosive it is towards certain metals.

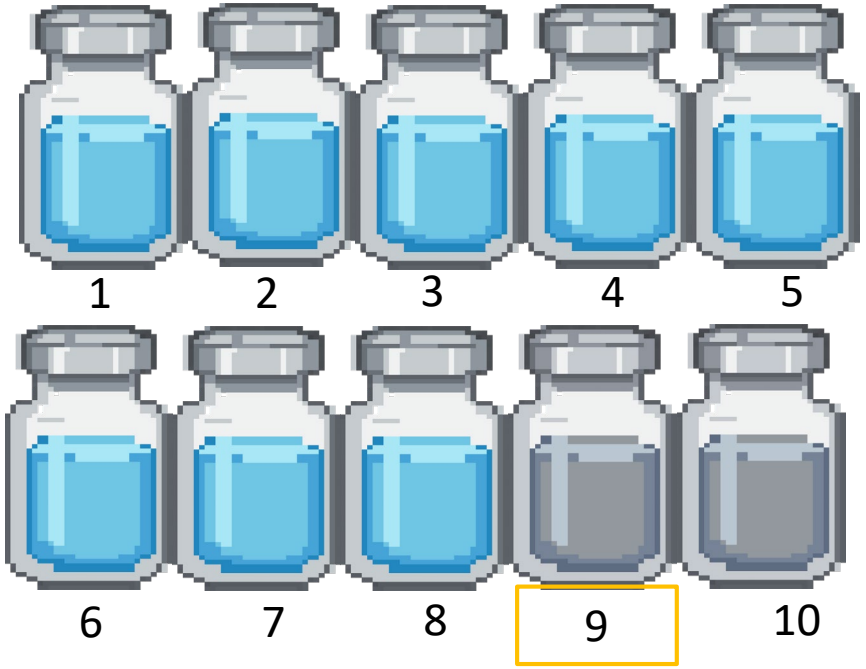
What is a lead action level exceedance?

- A lead action level exceedance notification indicates that action must be taken by the water system to reduce and eliminate lead from drinking water.
- A lead action level exceedance does not mean that every tap used for drinking water has elevated levels of lead.

Lead Compliance Sampling

- Hibbing is required to collect lead and copper samples regularly.
- 6 of 29 samples collected in August & September 2025 had high levels of lead.
- Samples were collected at highest-risk lead sites.
- Find out what your service line material is by visiting the LITT tool.

What were Hibbing's results?



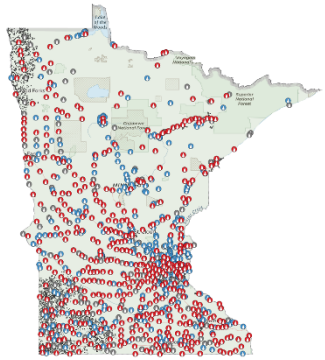
90th percentile (ppb)	EPA Action Level (ppb)	Range of results (ppb)
32	15	0 – 69

Lead and copper compliance is based on the 90th percentile of samples collected.

What is Hibbing PUC required to do?

- Investigate the issue and identify corrosion control steps.
- Perform additional testing over the next year.
- Continue to look for lead service lines and update their inventory.

What can residents do?

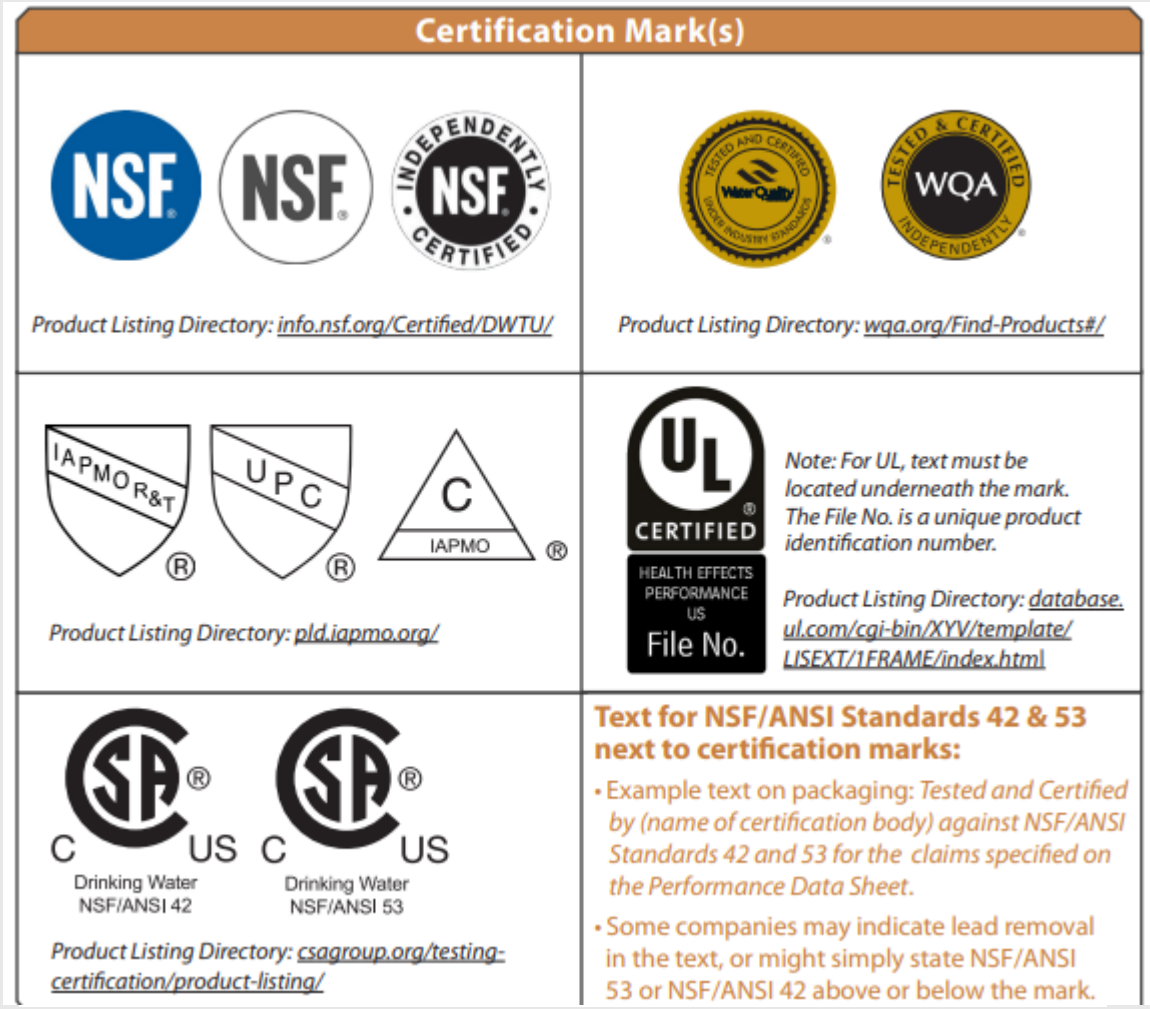


- **Help** find lead service lines
- **Let the water run**
- **Use** cold water
- **Clean** your aerator regularly

- **Learn** about construction in your neighborhood
- **Test and treat** your water
- **Purchase** and use a certified lead filter

Filters

- Filters are an interim solution for residents to continue to have safe drinking water while the system can solve the issue.
- The pitcher filter should be certified to **NSF/ANSI 53** standards to reduce lead or **NSF/ANSI 42** standards to remove particulates.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for when and how to change the filter cartridge.

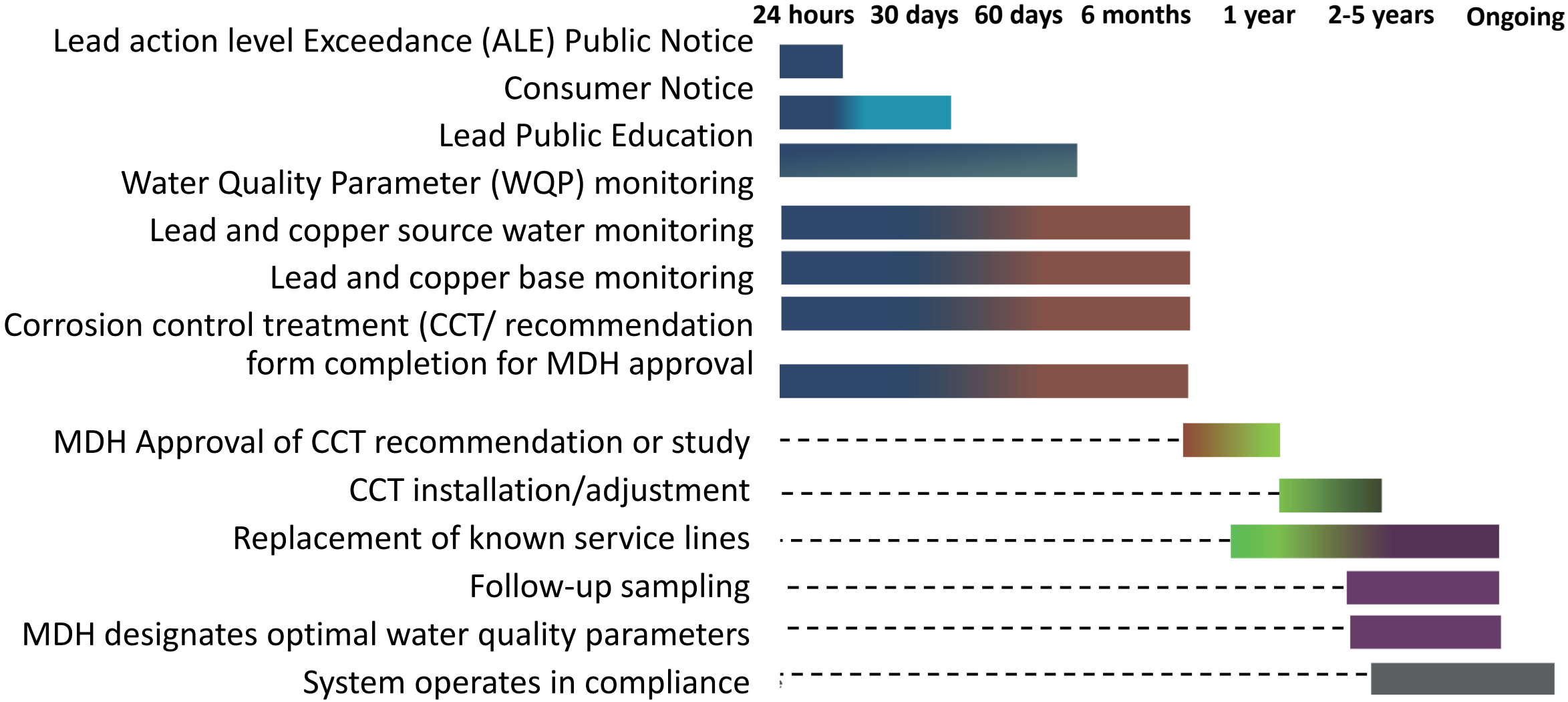


Thank You!

Lead in Drinking Water - MN Dept. of Health

Hannah Mendez
hannah.mendez@state.mn.us

Lead ALE Timeline: Summary



Get the Lead Out:

Lead Identification & Removal

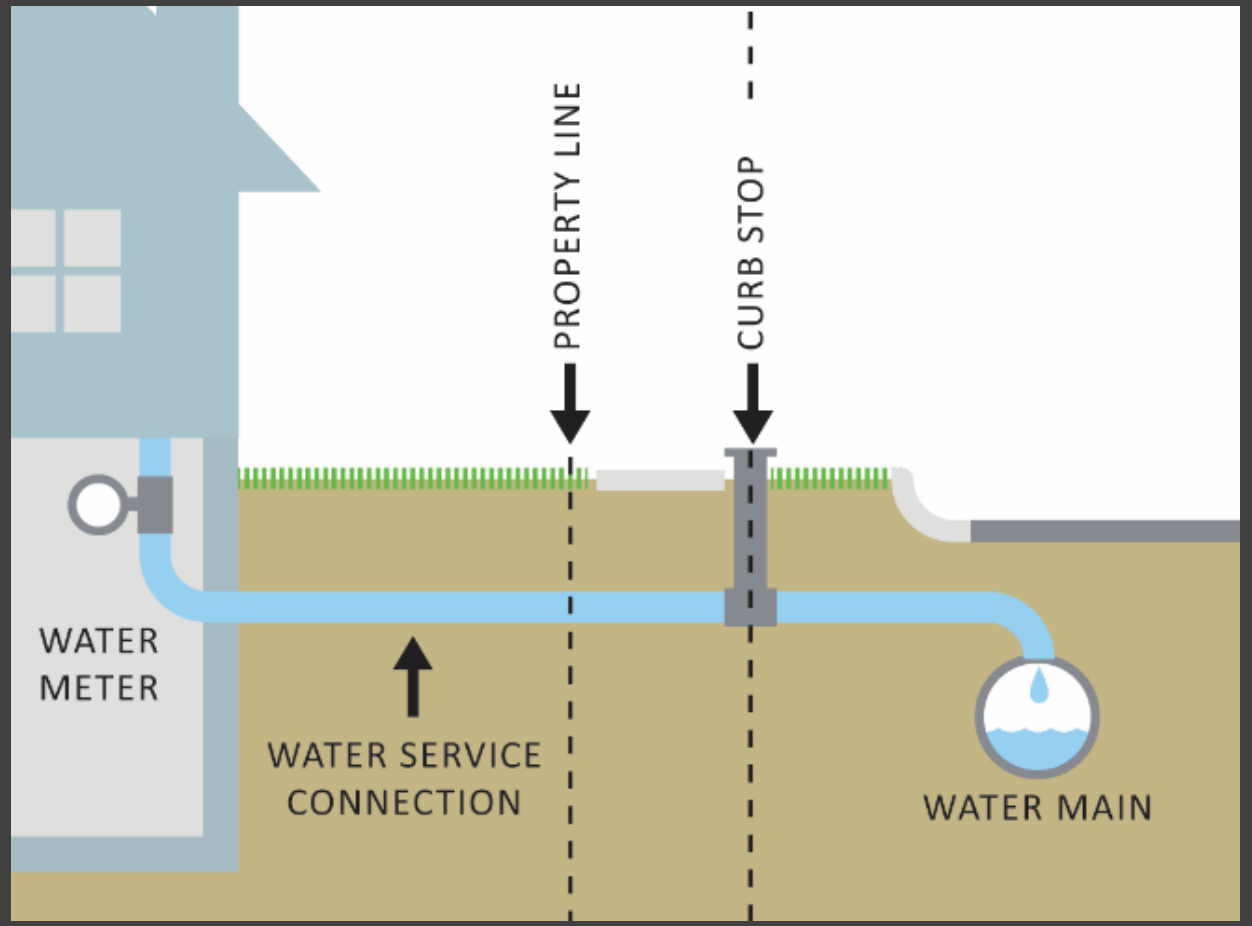
Hibbing Public Utilities Commission

January 12th, 2026

HPU HIBBING PUBLIC UTILITIES

Understanding the Problem

- October 22nd, 2025 Lead Action Level Exceedance
- Lead Service Lines are the primary source of contamination
- Utility Side vs Customer Side
- Lead & Galvanized Lines must be replaced



Work to Date

November 2022
HPU Approves Water Main Improvement Plan

March 2024
HPU begins Service Line Inventory

October 2024
15 lead service lines replaced

December 2025
System-wide Lead Response Plan Proposed

October 2025
HPU is notified of Lead Level Exceedance

A System-wide Response

Step 1: Investigation

Investigative Projects

- Required by Federal directive
- Identifies at-risk residents for preventative measures
- Data Collection to inform decision making
- Qualifies work for external funding

Service Line Inventory

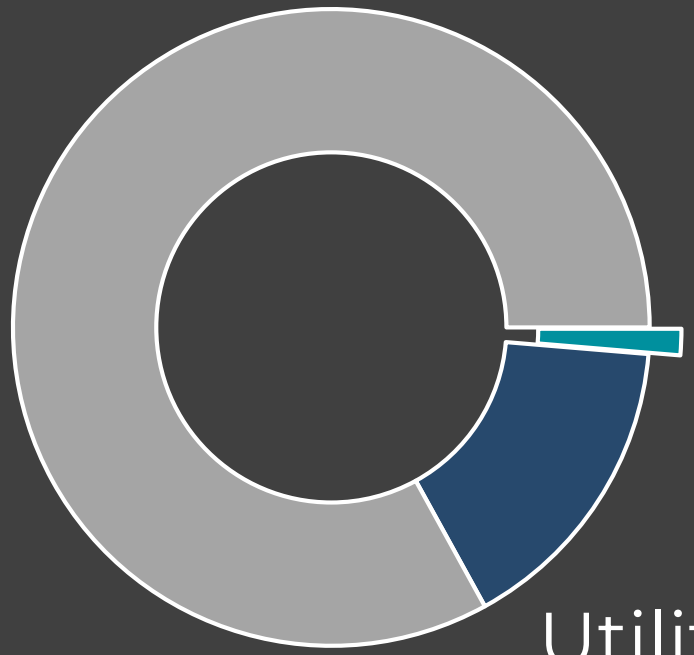
- Started in March 2024
- Quick & Inexpensive Process
- Can be performed by the homeowner or HPU

Service Line Pot Holing

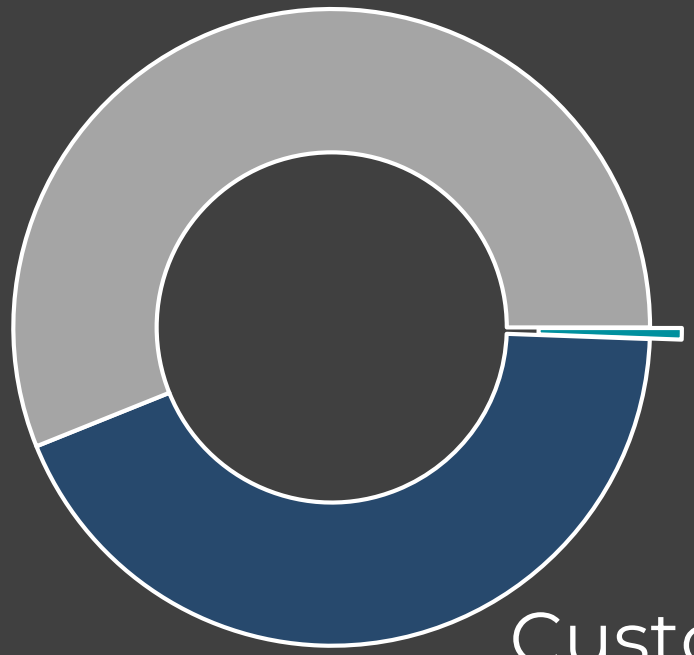
- Started in November 2025
- Best available process to identify both sides of the line
- Work prioritized based upon:
  - Age of neighborhood
  - Results of Service Line Inventory
- Can be performed in ~30 min.

Investigative Results

Utility Side



Customer Side



Utility Side

- Replacement: 76
- Non-Lead: 892
- Unknown: 4729

Customer Side

- Replacement: 49
- Non-Lead: 3,653
- Unknown: 1,995

A System-wide Response

Step 2: Risk Reduction

Risk Reduction

- Significantly reduces the risk of lead contamination
- Restore Hibbing's water system to compliance
- Eliminate primary sources of lead contamination from Water System

Corrosion Control Treatment

- Provides a system-wide solution to protect residents from existing lead sources
- Creates a mineral barrier to prevent lead contamination
- Expected completion: Year-end 2026
- Common across many MN Cities

Lead Removal Projects

- Definitive solution to remove sources of lead contamination
- Accomplished in alignment with Water Main Improvement Planning
- 8 blocks with >30% concentration identified for 2026

A System-wide Response

Funding Need

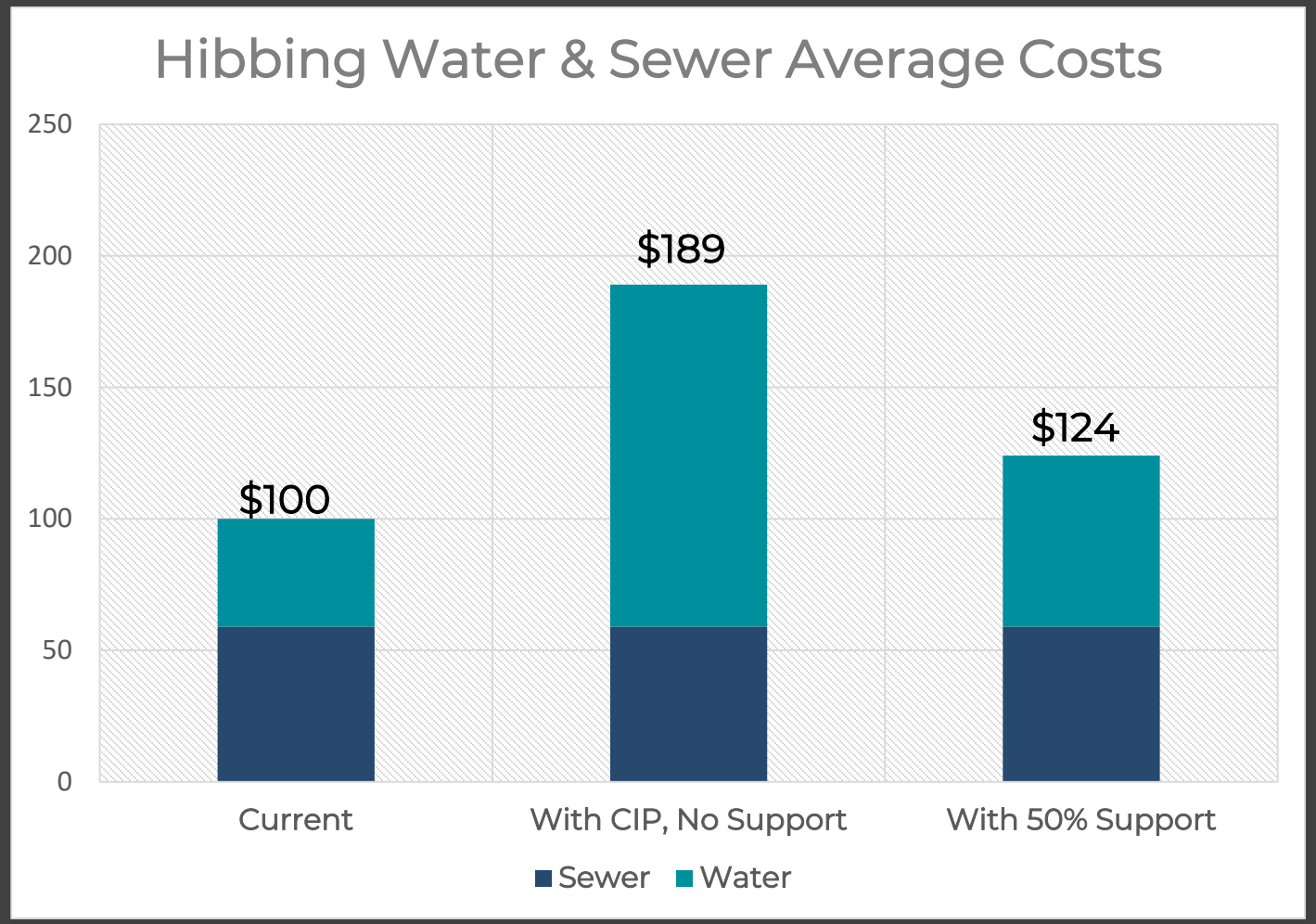
Water System Needs

- Average age of Hibbing Water Main: 62 years
- 1.4 Million Gallon water deficit at peak usage
- Lead Action Exceedance Level

10-Year Water Planning

Project	Amount
Water Main Capital Improvement Plan	$ 50.0 M
Water Supply & Treatment Improvements	$ 37.0 M
Get The Lead Out Projects	$ 10.0 M
Total Expense (approx.)	**$ 97.0 M**

Protecting Affordability



- HPU will seek $48.5 million in external funding
- Key external funders include the state and federal legislatures

Community Involvement

- Local support of projects
- Project Advocacy
- Support of the bipartisan infrastructure bonding bill with strong fiscal accountability

Questions & Answers

- Health Impacts & Common Sources of Lead Contamination

- Annual Lead Testing Process
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- Get the Lead Out Projects
- Need for support

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