



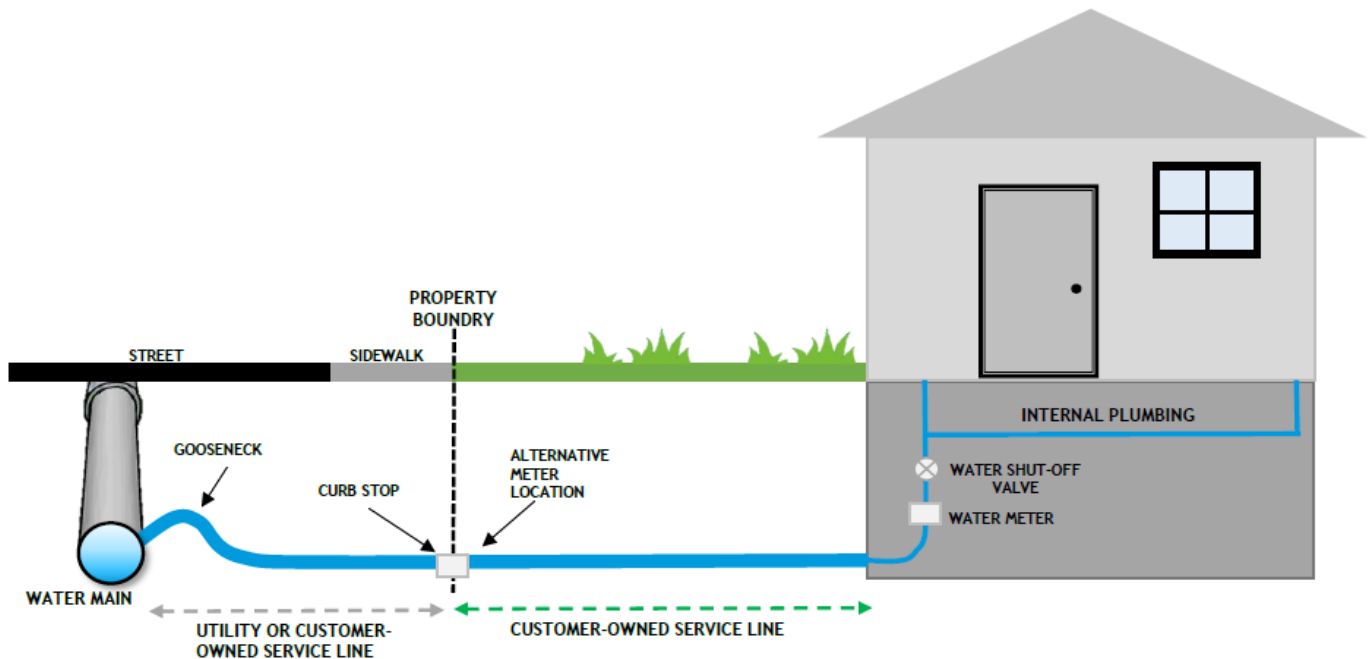
LEAD AND COPPER

Service line material identification guide

What is a service line?

A water service line is the underground pipe that carries water from the water main, likely in the street, into your home or building. Water service lines may be made of lead, copper, galvanized steel or iron, or plastic. In some cases, the water provider owns a part of the service line (up to the private property boundary). It is more common for the homeowner to own the entire service line, however. The service line may be all one type of material or several types if repairs or updates have been made.

Most service lines in Colorado are **non-lead** (e.g. copper or plastic). Lead service lines became less common after 1950, but could have been used until the 1986 federal ban on lead pipe, unless there was an earlier local ordinance or control.



Use the information below to check your water service line material:

1. **Locate and visually inspect** the service line as it enters the house or building, if accessible. This is usually located on the lowest floor or crawlspace facing the street. Inspect the first 18” of pipe coming out from the foundation and prior to the main water shutoff valve (see figure right) or meter. Be careful not to confuse the line with the sewer or gas line.

Homes built after 1986 are not expected to have lead service lines or lead plumbing. Search the county assessor's office records and realty websites such as Zillow to check home build dates.



2. **Do a scratch test:** Gently scrape the pipe using a coin or the flat edge of a screwdriver to reveal the metal. Do not use a knife or sharp object.
 - **Lead** pipes are usually dull gray and easy to scratch. If the scratched area appears shiny silver and flakes off, the pipe could be lead.
 - **Galvanized** steel is gray to silver in color and harder to scratch. If the scraped area is dull and gray, the pipe is likely galvanized steel.
 - **Copper** pipes are copper to bronze in color. If the scraped area is copper in color, similar to a penny, the pipe is copper.
3. **Use a magnet,** such as a refrigerator magnet, to see if it sticks to the pipe.
 - A magnet will not stick to lead pipe, but will stick to galvanized steel.

Scratch and magnet test for service line material



Lead pipe

Magnets do not stick to lead pipes.

If you scratch the pipe with a coin, the scraped area will appear shiny silver and flake off.



Copper pipe

Magnets do not stick to copper pipes.

If you scratch the pipe with a coin, the scraped area will appear copper in color, the same as a penny.



Galvanized steel pipe

Magnets will stick to the surface of a galvanized steel pipe.

If you scratch the pipe with a coin, it will appear dull and gray.

Other ways to check service line material type

- Lead swab kits can be purchased online or at a home improvement store. These kits test the pipe surface, not the water inside the pipes. Look for an EPA recognized kit.
- Contact a licensed plumber to inspect your pipes and plumbing for lead or galvanized steel.

Questions or concerns?

Contact the Drinking Water Compliance Assurance section at 303-692-3556 or visit <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/wqcdcompliance>.