

# US to replace all lead water lines within 10 years

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President Joe Biden's administration on Thursday announced it would require the removal of the nation's remaining lead pipes within a decade, preventing an estimated 22 million people from potential exposure to the

toxic metal in their drinking water.

The new action comes after successful lawsuits filed by multiple states and nonprofits acting on behalf of impacted communities, which are disproportionately low-income and from racial minorities.

"Today's proposed action significantly advances President Biden's commitment to remove every lead service line in America to protect children and vulnerable populations from the negative impacts of lead in drinking water," the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said.

There is no safe level of lead exposure: It evades a key defense of the body known as the blood-brain-barrier, and even trace amounts cause irreversible cognitive damage to children.

In adults it can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, [high blood pressure](#), decreased kidney function and cancer.

Biden's administration announced its intention in 2021 to remove remaining lead lines over the coming years, but the plan was criticized for actually slowing down the rate of replacement and even allowing small public water systems to avoid replacing them altogether.

The government was subsequently sued by nine states and the District of Columbia, as well as the environmental justice groups Earthjustice and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The new plan sets a firm timeline of replacement within 10 years.

"The EPA's proposed improvements to the Lead and Copper Rule are a much-needed response to a dire public health crisis that's been ongoing for more than a century," said Suzanne Novak, Earthjustice attorney, in a statement.

A serious contamination problem was uncovered in Flint, Michigan in 2014 when the city switched its drinking water supply from Detroit's system to the Flint River to save costs. Water quality and [health issues](#) for residents—including skin rashes and hair loss—were long ignored by authorities.

"Safe potable [water](#) is a human right," said Janette McCarthy Wallace, general counsel of the NAACP, a racial justice group. "We intend to hold the EPA to its word on 100% replacement of lead pipes within the next decade."

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