



Town of Onoway

Box 540, Onoway, AB T0E 1V0

Lead monitoring initiative

The water in the Town of Onoway water utility service comes from **EPCOR**, where extensive water testing during the treatment process ensures the water is safe and clean for all customers and their families.

There are no measurable levels of lead in drinking water when it leaves EPCOR's water treatment plants; however, lead may be found in the tap water of homes with lead service line pipes or if it's present in lead plumbing and fixtures inside of homes. It's important to note that we are not aware of any lead service lines in the Town of Onoway.

Health Canada guidelines for lead in drinking water

In 2019, **Health Canada** changed the guidelines for lead in drinking water. The two major changes are as follows:

1. The maximum acceptable concentration of lead in drinking water was reduced from 10 µg/l (micrograms per litre) to 5 µg/l.
2. All municipalities are required to complete testing at the tap from within a customer's home instead of testing in the distribution system, which was the previous requirement.

Although the maximum concentration of lead in water is 5 µg/l, there is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe, and efforts to reduce lead levels to be as low as achievable are encouraged.

To comply with Health Canada's guidelines and Alberta regulations for lead in drinking water, we are implementing a **lead monitoring initiative**. As part of our plan, we will now complete water testing at residents' taps instead of within the distribution system.

Our lead monitoring initiative will follow a two-phase approach:

1. Conduct water sampling to assess if there are any unacceptable levels of lead in water lines.
2. Implement a lead mitigation strategy if unacceptable levels of lead are found.

Lead Management

Our Lead Management program is in place to support the continued health and safety of our residents, and is required as part of a provincial program to ensure compliance with Health Canada's [Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality](#), which were updated in 2019.

What's changed?

The Town of Onoway – along with all Canadian municipalities – has been mandated by Health Canada to adhere to stricter lead limits in municipal drinking water.

The Maximum Acceptable Concentration (MAC) has been lowered from 10 to 5 parts per billion (PPB). They also changed the location from where compliance must be met from the system's point of distribution to the customer's tap.

Because of these changes, the provincial government is requiring a system assessment of drinking water to be completed by September 2021 in all municipalities, including Onoway.

Water sample collection

To complete the required system assessment, the Town is asking for the cooperation of residents in 20 randomly selected properties to provide water samples between May – September 2021.

- Properties invited to participate have been chosen at random, and will receive a letter directly from the Town.
- Appointments will include a Town Utility operator(s) collecting a small water sample from the kitchen tap, as well as conducting a brief visual inspection of the property's water line at the water meter.
- Results will be shared with the property owner/tenant as soon as they are available (anticipated to be within a few weeks of sampling).
- If lead above the MAC is identified through this sampling program, the Town will support the property owner in investigating potential sources and immediate solutions for consumption. Please note the property owner is responsible for their household plumbing and fixtures.

Residents with questions about the sampling program or their water are encouraged to call the Public Works Manager at 780-967-5338.

Onoway's drinking water is safe and clean, and is supplied by EPCOR.

The likelihood of lead service lines existing in our Town is low. The majority of neighbourhoods in Onoway were built post-1960, by which time lead was generally no longer used in service lines (nor was lead used in *all* service lines before 1960). Today, the preferred material for water service lines is copper or plastic.

You can check your water service line by using [EPCOR's 3-Step Testing Process](#). If you are asked to participate in the Town of Onoway's 2021 sampling program, the Town Utility operator(s) will also conduct a service line inspection during your scheduled appointment.

If you would like to test your water using a home sampling kit (not as part of the Town's 2021 sampling program), we encourage you to view [EPCOR's list of accredited labs](#).

Lead in drinking water

Lead is a neurotoxin that can leach from plumbing fixtures into the tap water supply, and has been linked to a variety of health risks. More details can be found in [Health Canada's Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality](#).

Sometimes, household plumbing fixtures or pipes can contain lead. This was particularly common in older construction materials. When water sits in contact with lead material for an extended period of time (e.g. overnight), the lead can leach into and accumulate in the water.

Lead *may* be present in:

- Water service lines (unlikely to exist in Onoway)
- Household plumbing (responsibility of the property owner)
 - Older fixtures and faucets
 - Interior water pipes
 - Solder that connects pipes

Some steps you can take to reduce any potential lead in drinking water include:

- Use a point-of-use filter designed to reduce lead in water (e.g. Brita)
- Flush your water by running kitchen tap for several minutes.
- Avoid using the hot water tap for consumption, as higher temperatures can accelerate the leaching process in pipes that may contain lead. Use only cold water for drinking and cooking.
- Remove and replace identified lead sources with lead-free fixtures, faucets, and pipes.
- Install faucet mounts or filtered faucets plumbed-in to separate taps, kitchen sink, or countertop

As part of their [Lead Mitigation Strategy](#), EPCOR plans to add a lead inhibitor (e.g. orthophosphate) to the water supply in the coming years, which will create a protective

coating inside any lead pipes and plumbing to prevent lead from leaching into the drinking water. Please note, however, the most effective solution is to physically remove the lead source and replace it with newer lead-free materials

FOIP or privacy clause

To the customer:

The personal information you provide is being collected under the authority of the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, Potable Water Regulation 16(1)* for the sole purpose of conducting the waterworks system lead survey of tap water. Please note that your tap water sample results and your address will be disclosed to Alberta Environment and Parks as part of required reporting under this program. Your personal information will not be shared further unless you provide additional consent to do so. By providing your tap water sample and personal information, you are consenting to this collection, use and disclosure. If you have any questions about this program or the collection, use and disclosure of your personal information, please contact: Shelley Vaughan at 780-967-5338 or at shelley@onoway.ca