

**USA TODAY**  
03.17.16

**IN SPORTS**  
**16 SEEDS THAT COULD BREAK YOUR BRACKET**

TODAY'S NCAA TOURNAMENT MATCHUPS



PHOTOS BY AP



# BEYOND FLINT

## HIGH LEAD LEVELS FOUND IN 2,000 WATER SYSTEMS ACROSS USA

**LEAD IN YOUR WATER**  
A USA TODAY NETWORK INVESTIGATION

Alison Young and Mark Nichols  
USA TODAY

**FIND MORE AT LEAD.USATODAY.COM**  
Learn how we identified systems with excessive lead and see whether your system failed EPA testing.



Melissa Hoffman, 40, expresses her concerns about high lead levels found at her children's school, Caroline Elementary, during a town hall meeting in Ithaca, N.Y., on March 3.

While a harsh national spotlight focuses on the drinking water crisis in Flint, Mich., a USA TODAY NETWORK investigation has identified almost 2,000 additional water systems spanning all 50 states where testing has shown excessive levels of lead contamination over the past four years. The water systems, which reported lead levels exceeding Environmental Protection Agency standards, collectively supply water to 6 million people. About 350 of those systems provide drinking water to schools or day cares. The USA TODAY NETWORK investigation found at least 180 of the water systems failed to notify con-

**INSIDE**  
► How lead gets into your drinking water  
► How to check your supply

sumers about the high lead levels as federal rules require. Many of the highest reported lead levels were found at schools and day cares. A water sample at a Maine elementary school was 42 times higher than the EPA limit of 15 parts per billion, while a Pennsylvania preschool was 14 times higher, records show. At an el-

ementary school in Ithaca, N.Y., one sample tested this year at a stunning 5,000 ppb of lead, the EPA's threshold for "hazardous waste." "This is most definitely a problem that needs emergent care," Melissa Hoffman, a parent in Ithaca, pleaded with officials at a public hearing packed with upset parents demanding answers. In all, the USA TODAY NETWORK analysis of EPA enforcement data identified 600 water systems in which tests at some taps showed lead levels topping 40 parts per billion (ppb), which is more than double the EPA's action level limit. Though experts caution that Flint is an extreme case of

► STORY CONTINUES ON 5A

GETTY IMAGES

**NEWSLINE**

**IN NEWS**

**Voters turn out in record numbers**  
Tight Republican race brings people to polls.

**IN MONEY**

**Fed signals slower rate hikes**  
Holds interest rates steady, raises doubts about June increase.

**IN LIFE**

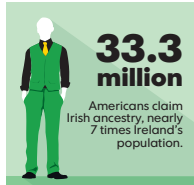
**'Passion' for live TV musicals grows**  
Chris Daughtry to play Jesus' disciple Judas in modern take on story.

**HOME DELIVERY**  
1-800-872-0001  
USATODAYSERVICE.COM



**USA SNAPSHOTS\***

**Kiss us, we're Irish**



Note: German is the only European ancestry claimed by more Americans. Source: WalletHub. TERREY BYRNE AND VERONICA BRAVO, USA TODAY



President Obama and Vice President Biden listen as Judge Merrick Garland speaks at the White House on Wednesday after he was nominated to the Supreme Court.

## High court pick is centrist, but Senate still defiant

Obama chooses Merrick Garland to fill seat

Gregory Korte  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON The battle for control of the Supreme Court now has a name: Merrick Garland. President Obama named the federal appeals court judge to a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday, setting up a nearly unprecedented political fight with a GOP-controlled Senate that has vowed to block any movement on the nomination. "I've selected a nominee who is widely recognized not only as one of America's sharpest legal minds, but someone who brings to his work a spirit of decency, modesty, integrity, even-handedness and excellence," Obama said in a Rose Garden announcement. "Today, I am nominating Chief Judge Merrick Brian Garland to join the Supreme Court." If confirmed by the Senate, Garland, generally considered a moderate, would replace the conservative bulwark Antonin Scalia, tipping a delicate balance on the court that could impact decisions

on abortion, the death penalty and voting rights. At 63, he would be the oldest nominee for associate justice since President Nixon nominated 64-year-old Lewis Powell in 1971. In his Rose Garden remarks Wednesday, a choked-up Garland described his early years as a prosecutor seeking to convince scared mothers and grandmothers to testify against gang members. "Trust that justice will be done in our courts without prejudice or partisanship is what in large part distinguishes this country from others," he said. The nomination faces a defiant Senate, where GOP leaders have vowed not to meet with any Obama nominee. They want to wait until after the election, in hopes that a Republican president will choose Scalia's successor. "The next justice could fundamentally alter the direction of the Supreme Court... so of course the American people should have a say in the court's direction," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Wednesday.

## Garland prosecuted Okla. City bombing

Kevin Johnson  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON In the months after the Oklahoma City bombing, as federal authorities considered who should face death penalty charges, defense attorney Michael McGuire entered a crowded downtown conference room where prosecutors and FBI agents hotly pursued the cooperation of McGuire's client. The attorney had represented Michael Fortier for only a few days before that face-to-face meeting with the government, one of sev-

► STORY CONTINUES ON 2A

## U.S. calls on N. Korea to free student

American tourist sentenced to 15 years

Jane Onyanga-Omara  
USA TODAY

The Obama administration demanded that North Korea release an American college student sentenced Wednesday to 15 years of hard labor for allegedly pilfering a propaganda banner as a souvenir. Officials arrested University of Virginia student Otto Warmbier from Wyoming, Ohio, for allegedly "perpetrating a hostile act" in Pyongyang while traveling with a tour group in January. White House spokesman Josh Earnest accused North Korea of using "U.S. citizens as pawns to pursue a political agenda." Tensions between the U.S. and North Korea have reached a fever pitch after the communist nation tested international patience by launching missiles. The U.S. has sought tougher sanctions. At the University of Virginia, classmates reacted with disbelief to his sentencing. "It doesn't feel real, this just doesn't happen to people," said student Alaina Patrick, who lived in the same dorm as Warmbier. Two weeks ago, North Korea presented Warmbier to the media in Pyongyang, where he apologized for trying to steal the banner from a hotel. He said he wanted it as a trophy for a church member in Wyoming and said it was the worst mistake of his life.

Contributing: Hannah Hall

STATE-BY-STATE 4A AMERICA'S MARKETS 4B MARKETPLACE TODAY 5D PUZZLES 5D TONIGHT ON TV 6D WEATHER 6A YOUR SAY 6A

Read the pdf or click here to read online



**LEAD IN YOUR WATER**  
A USA TODAY NETWORK INVESTIGATION



ROMAIN BLANQUART, DETROIT FREE PRESS

**Melissa Hoffman, 40, expresses her concerns about high lead levels found at her children's school, Caroline Elementary, during a town hall meeting in Ithaca, N.Y., on March 3.**



# BEYOND FLINT

## **Excessive lead levels found in almost 2,000 water systems across all 50 states**

Alison Young and Mark Nichols, *USA TODAY*

While a harsh national spotlight focuses on the drinking water crisis in Flint, Mich., a USA TODAY NETWORK investigation has identified almost 2,000 additional water systems spanning all 50 states where testing has shown excessive levels of lead contamination over the past four years.

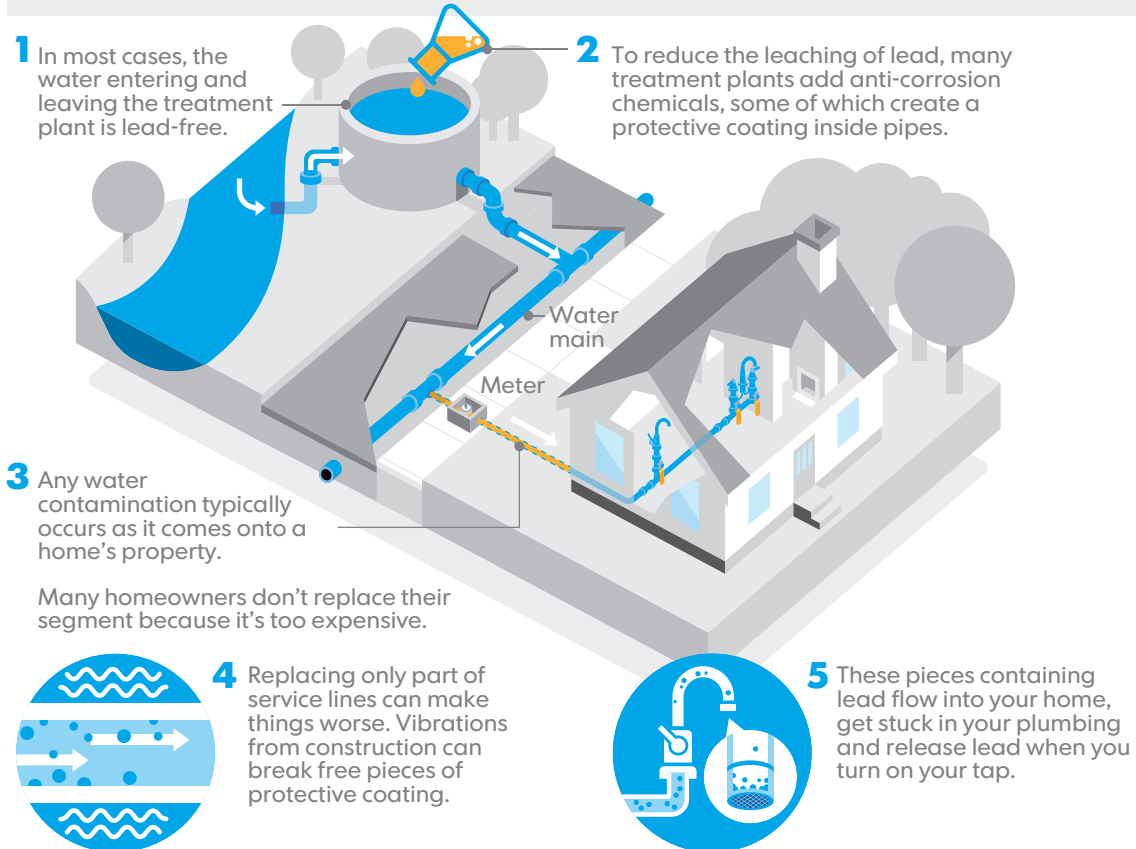
The water systems, which reported lead levels exceeding Environmental Protection Agency standards, collectively supply water to 6 million people. About 350 of those

systems provide drinking water to schools or day cares. The USA TODAY NETWORK investigation also found at least 180 of the water systems failed to notify consumers about the high lead levels as federal rules require.

Many of the highest reported lead levels were found at schools and day cares. A water sample at a Maine elementary school was 42 times higher than the EPA limit of 15 parts per billion, while a Pennsylvania preschool

**HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO YOUR DRINKING WATER?**

More than 7 million U.S. homes are estimated to have service lines made of lead that can leach into water. Millions more homes built before 1986 have solder and fixtures that can leach lead.



**Source** USA TODAY NETWORK research  
KARL GELLES, USA TODAY

was 14 times higher, records show. At an elementary school in Ithaca, N.Y., one sample tested this year at a stunning 5,000 ppb of lead, the EPA's threshold for "hazardous waste."

"This is most definitely a problem that needs emergent care," Melissa Hoffman, a parent in Ithaca, forcefully pleaded with officials at a public hearing packed with upset parents demanding answers.

In all, the USA TODAY NETWORK analysis of EPA enforcement data identified 600 water systems in which tests at some taps showed lead levels topping 40 parts per billion (ppb), which is more than double the EPA's action level limit. While experts caution Flint is an extreme case of pervasive contamination, those lead levels rival the 400-plus of the worst samples in far more extensive testing of around 15,000 taps across Flint. The 40 ppb mark also stands as a threshold that the EPA once labeled on its website an "imminent" health threat for pregnant women and young children.

Even at small doses, lead poses a health threat, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead can damage growing brains and cause reduced IQs, attention disorders and other problem behaviors. Infants fed formula made with contaminated tap water face significant risk. Adults are not immune, with evidence linking lead exposure to kidney problems, high blood pressure and increased risks of cardiovascular deaths. The EPA stresses there is no safe level of lead exposure.

**Fractured system, limited testing**

Most Americans get their drinking water from a fragmented network of about 155,000 different water systems serving everything from big cities to individual businesses and school buildings. The EPA determines that a system has exceeded the lead standard when more than 10% of samples taken show lead levels above 15 parts per billion. It's called an "action level" because, at that level, water systems are required to take action



to reduce contamination. But enforcement, which is implemented state by state, can be inconsistent and spotty. Some 373 systems have failed repeatedly, with tests continuing to find excessive lead in tests months or even years later, the EPA data shows. What's more, the systems have widely varying levels of financial resources and staff training.

Amid cotton fields in Lamesa, Texas, for example, tests last year showed lead contamination more than seven times the EPA limit at Klondike Independent School District, which serves 260 students in a single K-12 building. "Some things just slip by," said the school superintendent Steve McLaren when pressed about skipping a round of testing in 2014. In a tiny school system, McLaren said leaders "wear a lot of hats." At times he's served as principal and bus driver, in addition to being superintendent and in charge of the drinking water system. The school replaced drinking fountains, and plans to replace its entire water system next fall. McLaren said he's concerned about how high lead levels might affect students and understands the need for action. But he said, "Our kids are strapping and healthy, and they've been drinking this water all their lives."

The testing required by the government can include samples from as few as five or 10 taps in a year, or even over multiple years. The system is designed only to give an indication of whether homes or buildings with lead pipes and plumbing may be at higher risk of lead leaching into water. Even the biggest water systems in cities are required to test just 50 to 100 taps.

The limited and inconsistent testing means the full scope of the lead contamination problem could be even more widespread. People in thousands more communities served by water systems that have been deemed in compliance with the EPA's lead rules have no assurance their drinking water is safe from the brain-damaging toxin.

"This is just a case where we have a rule that's not been adequately protective," said Lynn Goldman, a former EPA official and dean of George Washington University's school of public health. "The entire design of the regulation doesn't tell you about your own water."

Drinking water typically isn't contaminated with lead when it leaves the treatment plant. It becomes contaminated as it travels through lead service lines on individual properties and lead plumbing fixtures inside homes. At best, the EPA's rules and testing are a sentinel system, alerting officials of the need to treat their water with anti-corrosion chemicals. Doing so reduces, but does not eliminate, the lead in water reaching the tap.

There are about 75 million homes across the country built before 1980, meaning they're most likely to contain some lead plumbing. That's more than half of the country's housing units, according to the Census Bureau. The heaviest concentrations are in New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

"You would hope that the cities and the counties and the state and the federal government would be holding people's feet to the fire when it comes to providing quality water to the consumer if there is an issue," said Terry Heckman, a board member at the Arizona Water Quality Association, a group that represents water systems. "That's what the government is supposed to do, is look over the general welfare of the populace."

### **Flint's risk factors not rare**

Experts say what happened in Flint is an extreme case and helps show how the limited testing required by the EPA provides only a crude indicator of systems where harmful levels of lead may be in water at homes with lead pipes.

The struggling city of about 100,000 people passed the government's required lead tests. But one resident's vocal complaints spurred extra tests at her home, revealing shocking levels of lead contamination: 104 to 13,200 ppb. The crisis worsened as independent researchers tested 300 samples across the city, revealing homes with high lead levels that the government-mandated tests missed. More than 10% contained at least 27 ppb of lead. Since then, regulators conducted another 15,000 tests. More than 1,000 samples show lead above the 15 ppb limit, and more than 400 show dangerous levels above 40 ppb.

One unique factor in Flint: the water

department changed to a corrosive river water source, then failed to treat it with anti-corrosion chemicals. The result: a pervasive contamination problem as the insides of old lead pipes broke down and released a torrent of poison.

Yet the fundamental risk factor in Flint – old lead service lines that deliver water to homes, plus interior plumbing containing lead – is a common problem for tens of millions of homes mostly built before 1986. Unlike other contaminants that can be filtered out at the water plant, lead usually gets into drinking water at the end of the system, as it comes onto individual properties and into homes.

At greatest risk, experts say, are an estimated 7.3 million homes connected to their utility’s water mains by individual lead service lines -- the pipe carrying water from the main under the street onto your property and into your home. The water passes through what amounts to “a pure lead straw,” said Marc Edwards, a Virginia Tech environmental engineering professor who has studied water contamination in Flint and a similar, earlier crisis in Washington, D.C.

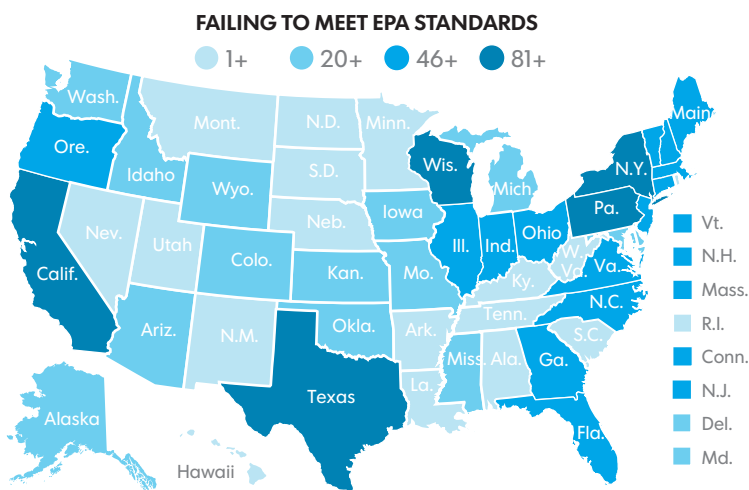
Lead service lines were mostly installed before the 1930s, although some communities continued to lay lead pipes for decades longer.

The way tap water becomes contaminated – at or even inside individual homes – poses a vexing problem for regulators, utilities and consumers. A home with a lead service line and older internal plumbing may have high levels of lead in its tap water. But a nearby, newly constructed home may have no lead contamination. The only way to know if your house is at risk is to find out about its water line and plumbing.

“People are legitimately concerned about what they’re hearing in the wake of Flint,” said Lynn Thorp, of the advocacy group Clean Water Action, who recently served on a federal work-group on lead in drinking water. “As

**ELEVATED LEAD LEVELS IN DRINKING WATER ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

Since 2012, elevated lead levels have been detected at nearly 2,000 water systems across the U.S., requiring officials to notify customers and take action. The number of times water systems have exceeded the EPA’s lead standards:



Go to [lead.usatoday.com](http://lead.usatoday.com) to explore which counties in your state have exceeded the EPA’s lead standards.

Source USA TODAY NETWORK research  
KARL GELLES, USA TODAY

long as we have lead in contact with drinking water, we can have exposure at the tap.”

Thorp said consumers need to become educated about any risks at their individual homes.

**What is government doing?**

Under the EPA’s Lead and Copper Rule, implemented in 1991, the government’s approach for protecting people from lead in drinking water has relied heavily on water systems monitoring for indications that their water has become more corrosive. The more corrosive the water, the more lead will be drawn out of pipes. Treatment of water with anti-corrosion chemicals can only reduce, not eliminate, lead from leaching into tap water in invisible and tasteless doses.

That’s why the EPA’s National Drinking Water Advisory Council wrote agency leaders in December calling for removing lead service lines “to the greatest degree possible.” It’s a daunting recommendation since in most cases, the water utility owns part of the line and the rest belongs to the homeowner. A credit ratings firm warned this month that replacing lead service lines could cost tens of billions of dollars.

“We’re now dealing with a legacy issue on

private property distributed throughout many communities,” said Tracy Mehan, the American Water Works Association’s executive director of government affairs. The cost to replace each service line can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

Meanwhile, the EPA advisory council, whose members include experts from water utilities and state agencies, recommended that EPA take numerous steps to strengthen the existing regulation. They include developing a “household action level”

that would trigger public health actions when lead contamination reaches certain levels and ensuring the public receives more information about the risks they face.

In addition, state water regulators say, federal officials need to tell water utilities what level of lead contamination indicates an acute health risk that should trigger a “do not drink” alert to all of the systems’ customers. The EPA is evaluating the recommendations and expects to propose revisions to its lead contamination regulations in 2017.

“We really recognize there’s a need to strengthen the rule,” Joel Beauvais, deputy assistant administrator for EPA’s Office of Water, said in an interview.

While he characterized Flint as an outlier, he said, “There’s no question we have challenges with lead in drinking water across the country. Millions of lead service lines in thousands of systems.”

Changing the rules could take at least a year. Beauvais said the EPA is working now to make sure states fully enforce existing rules. The agency last month sent letters to governors and state regulators calling for greater attention to drinking water oversight. While federal rules are made by the EPA, they’re enforced by the states.

Because of Flint, some utilities and state water regulators said they were already taking a closer look at water systems where

### WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

If you’re not confident your home’s water is lead-free:

- ▶ Buy a water filter or treatment device. Our guide will help you find the filter that will work best for you.
- ▶ Search our database of water systems to see if your provider failed to meet the EPA’s lead standard.
- ▶ Contact your utility to find out if you have a lead service line. Find out which questions to ask when you call.
- ▶ Test your water, but see what we learned first about the quality you’ll get from store-bought kits and certified testing firms.
- ▶ Know the dangers of various levels of lead contamination.

**Find it all at [usatoday.com](http://usatoday.com) or [lead.usatoday.com](http://lead.usatoday.com)**

testing identified excessive lead.

“It has caused a sort of shock wave through the drinking water industry generally,” said Jim Taft, executive director of the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators. States are looking at water systems’ performance and oversight, he said, “to make sure we’re not missing something.”

### High lead in systems large, small

At a trailer home at the Maple Ridge Mobile Home Park in Corinna, Maine,

Christi Woodruff recalls the notice hung on her door last year alerting her to potential lead contamination in the neighborhood.

A mom with an 8-year-old daughter, Woodruff initially planned to get her water tested. But, she shrugged it off after the park’s landlord told her testing was unnecessary. “The manager said not to worry because it was only certain trailers ... He didn’t think my trailer was one of them,” she said.

Property manager Randy Dixon blamed tap water from a single old trailer with lead-soldered copper pipes for causing the park’s water to fail the EPA’s testing. He then told a USA TODAY NETWORK reporter to stop interviewing residents.

The analysis of EPA’s data show the Maine park is among almost 2,000 water systems flagged for having an “action level exceedance” for lead during 2012 through 2015. That generally means more than 10% of tap water samples taken during a testing period showed lead contamination above 15 ppb.

If you’re living in a home with a lead service line and received a notice about possible lead contamination, “it’s a good idea to get your water tested,” said Beauvais, the EPA water office official.

Most of the water systems that failed the EPA’s lead standard serve anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand people each, often running their lines to homes

in rural communities, or managing water for individual schools or businesses in remote areas.

In Lake Mills, Wisc., about 50 miles west of Milwaukee, EPA records show the utility serving water to 5,300 people failed lead tests in 2013, 2014 and again in 2015 with some readings several times the federal limit.

Paul Hermanson, director of Public Works, said Lake Mills sent fliers with water bills since 2010 urging residents in older homes to run their water 15 to 30 seconds before using it. The idea behind not using the first water out of the tap is to avoid drinking water that's been touching the old pipes and has the greatest risk of containing lead. "I don't know that there's a good solution to it other than running the water," he said.

Some of the older homes in the growing bedroom community of Firestone, Colo., about 30 miles north of Denver, tested for excessive lead four times since 2014, records show. Town officials said they have repeatedly notified their 9,500 water customers of potentially harmful lead levels and distributed information explaining how to reduce risk. "The fact that they haven't fixed this, that's annoying," said resident Heath Gaston.

The USA TODAY NETWORK analysis showed three of every four water systems that exceeded the lead standard from 2012 to 2015 served 500 people or less. They often lack the resources and staff expertise of larger systems. "Some of these small systems don't even have a full-time operator," said Taft, of the state water regulators association. They may rely on one person, responsible for several systems, he said. In the case of schools, the same staff that does building maintenance may be managing the water system.

But nearly 70 of the systems with excessive lead findings during the past four years each provide water to at least 10,000 people. They include:



ANDREW WEST, THE NEWS-PRESS

**Christi Woodruff of Corinna, Maine, keeps bottled water inside her trailer home, though her landlord told her the property's water is safe.**

Passaic Valley Water Commission, New Jersey: More than 315,000 people are served by the water system in the industrialized area of northern New Jersey with a history of other pollution crises. It failed to meet EPA's lead standards during two testing periods last year and one in 2012. Commission officials said a \$135 million construction project is underway to improve corrosion control. The utility officials also are publicly encouraging more people to participate in its lead-testing program.

New Bedford, Mass.: This municipal water system, which serves about 95,000 in a seaport city about an hour south of Boston, has been cited for excessive lead in 2014 and early 2015, EPA data show. Ron Labelle, the city's public infrastructure commissioner, said the area's housing is among the oldest in the Northeast and some still have lead service lines. A consultant has helped improve the system's anti-corrosion treatments, he said, and the city passed its most recent testing in December. Additional testing will be done this spring.

Bangor Water District, Maine: More than 28,000 people receive water from this system, which exceeded EPA's lead standards three times in 2012 and 2013. Operators tweaked chemicals used in its corrosion control program, and have been in compliance since.

### **Failure to notify people**

When testing does reveal high lead levels, the USA TODAY NETWORK found many people were not warned as required. Of the 180 cited for failing to notify the public, almost half were cited more than once, records show.

In Ohio, in the past year, seven water systems serving a combined 8,800 customers failed to notify residents of potential lead contamination within 60 days as required.



Tests found excessive lead last summer at homes in the village of Sebring. The water system didn't alert customers until January, after Flint started making national headlines. The Ohio EPA placed two employees on leave while investigating. State records show six other Ohio water systems also did not provide timely warnings to residents after failing lead tests. The systems supply water to mobile home parks, a subdivision, an arboretum and a church and its day care.

In Arizona, several water systems that found unsafe amounts of lead in drinking water samples taken several years ago failed to act until February, after the USA TODAY NETWORK began requesting data about lead levels in drinking water.

The principal at a boarding school near the Navajo Reservation was unaware until February that water from a faucet in a church at the property tested high for lead in 2013. Operators of a small water utility near the Mexico border and a small community system in eastern Arizona both had high lead test results in 2013. One said he didn't know any action was needed. The other conceded the lack of action was an oversight.

Misael Cabrera, director Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, acknowledged lapses in following up with some water systems. Cabrera said he's since asked all water providers for high lead levels to notify their customers. His department also is creating a system to better track compliance.

### **Without action, issues fester**

Without strong action by regulators, problems can fester, especially in small systems with limited resources.

In southeastern Oklahoma's Latimer County, a rural water system serving about 1,500 people has had excessive lead levels during seven testing periods since 2013, EPA data show. The Latimer County Rural Water District #2 failed more tests in the past three years than any water system in the country.

Little has been done to fix the problem.

The Latimer #2 district points its finger at its water supplier, and the supplier blames homeowners for not replacing bad plumbing.

"There's nothing we can do," said Linda Petty, office manager for the Latimer #2 district, which doesn't treat its own water. Latimer buys its water from the nearby Sardis Lake Water Authority. "We're at their mercy," she said.

"The water that we have coming out of the lake does not have lead in it," said Willie Williams, the Sardis Lake system's operator. "They have some houses in their system that have horrendous plumbing. There's not a single thing Latimer #2 can do about it and not a single thing I can do about it."

Customers received notices of the lead issue in their bills, the water system and residents said. County officials say they have not gotten calls from concerned residents.

"I haven't heard anybody saying anything about it," said John Medders, a county commissioner whose home is on the system. He recalled getting a notice in the fall. "Most of the time I just throw mine in the trash. I don't pay much mind to it."

Water regulators at the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality said they now plan to meet with both water systems and send state engineers to Latimer and 18 other water systems that don't comply with lead-contamination limits.

"The Flint, Michigan, situation has really opened our eyes to what's going on," said Patty Thompson, engineering manager for the department's public water supply group.

---

**Contributing:** Mark Alesia, The Indianapolis Star; Jessie Balmert, The (Newark, Ohio) Advocate; Patricia Borns, The (Fort Myers, Fla.) News-Press; Trevor Hughes, USA TODAY; Eric Litke, USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin; Jacy Marmaduke, Fort Collins Coloradoan; Caitlin McGlade, The Arizona Republic; Marty Schladen, The El Paso Times; Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press; Laura Ungar, USA TODAY; Jim Waymer, Florida Today; and Russell Zimmer, Asbury Park (N.J.) Press.





# USA TODAY 03.21.16



## NCAA TOURNAMENT

### ACC SENDS 6 TO SWEET 16

Conference shows its depth, strength with record number of teams in round of 16

#### IN SPORTS

Notre Dame forward Zach Auguste

ROBERT DEUTSCH/USA TODAY SPORTS

# OBAMA BEGINS HISTORIC CUBA VISIT

President Obama, first lady Michelle and daughters Malia, left, and Sasha arrive at Jose Marti International Airport in Havana on Sunday.



YURI CORTEZ/GETTY IMAGES

## First visit by U.S. president since Coolidge in 1928

Gregory Korte USA TODAY

HAVANA It's a key tenet of what might be called the Obama Doctrine: That engaging with isolated authoritarian regimes can bring about greater prosperity, peace, democracy and human rights. It's been credited with initial success in Myanmar (also known

as Burma), widely viewed as a failure in China and met with controversy in Iran.

Now that doctrine faces a key test in Cuba, where Obama landed Sunday for a three-day visit that will upend decades of history and could fundamentally transform life on the island.

Obama's visit will focus on rebuilding commercial ties between the U.S. and Cuba but also draw a harder line on human rights abuses by the Castro government. Just hours before his arrival, Cuban authorities arrested more than 50 human rights

activists at a weekly protest outside Havana.

Obama visited the newly reopened U.S. Embassy on Sunday and will meet one-on-one with Cuban President Raúl Castro on Monday. Tuesday he will meet with dissidents and attend a baseball game.

"Having a U.S. Embassy means we're more effectively able to advance our values, our interests and understand more effectively" the Cuban people's concerns, Obama said. "This is a historic visit and a historic opportunity."

► STORY CONTINUES ON 5A

#### NEWSLINE

##### IN MONEY

**MARIA BARTIROMO 3M CEO doesn't see a recession**  
Inge Thulin says consumer business and health care are strong growth areas in U.S.

##### IN LIFE

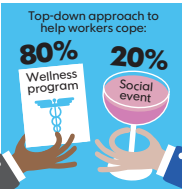
**13 years! Nia has good reason to wait on 'Greek 2'**  
"I was hiding a very private struggle," says film's writer and star.



© COPYRIGHT 2016 USA TODAY. A Division of Gannett Co., Inc.

#### USA SNAPSHOTS®

##### Memo on cutting stress



Source: Fitbit Wellness survey of 200 CEOs at companies with 1,000-10,000 employees. TERRY BYRNE AND JANET LOEHKE, USA TODAY



JACK GRUBER/USA TODAY

## Cuba arrests dozens

More than 50 dissidents rounded up.

#### IN NEWS

► A new approach or rewarding bad behavior?

#### IN OPINION

► In Cuba, the Rays embrace a goodwill mission.

#### IN SPORTS

## A failing grade on water safety

350 schools, day cares didn't pass lead tests

Laura Ungar USA TODAY

Whenever Jamison Rich got thirsty after gym or recess, he took a drink from the nearest water fountain at his elementary school.

Only last month did his family learn that the water bubbling out of some fountains contained high levels of lead, a notorious toxin

that can silently damage developing brains and slow growth in little bodies like his.

Recently, a blood test on the 7-year-old found more than twice the average level of lead for young children, even though as far as anyone knows he's never come in contact with lead paint or tainted soil.

Jamison's school, Caroline Elementary in Ithaca, N.Y., is one of hundreds across the nation where children were exposed to



Nicole Rich, 34, helps her children Jamison, 7, and Jersey, 9, do homework in Ithaca, N.Y.

LEAD IN YOUR WATER A USA TODAY NETWORK INVESTIGATION

► STORY CONTINUES ON 2A

## Blame owners, not builders, for the housing crunch

Paul Davidson USA TODAY

Gridlock in the housing market that's slowing first-time home purchases and trade-ups to better units is the chief reason for a persistent housing shortage, according to a new study.

The report by online real estate site Trulia casts doubt on the widespread belief that a scarcity of new construction is the main cause of a crunch that has driven

up home prices and slowed sales. Instead, the study says, a yawning price gap between midlevel and premium homes that's shutting out many move-up buyers is the biggest obstacle.

Also, a large share of entry-level homes are off the market because they're owned by investors or so-called "underwater" homeowners who owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth, so they effectively can't sell, the study says.

"Gridlock in the mid- to low-

end of the housing market is one of the main reasons for the low inventory," says Ralph McLaughlin, Trulia's chief economist and author of the study.

In January, there was a four-month supply of existing homes for sale in the U.S. well below a healthy six-month inventory, according to the National Association of Realtors. That drove up the median home price by 8.2% the past year, the biggest jump since last April.

Lawrence Yun, the Realtor

group's chief economist, says the main reason for the skimpy supply is sluggish single-family housing starts, which hit an eight-year high of 715,000 last year but was below a normal 1.2 million. McLaughlin disagrees, noting that new home sales represent less than 10% of all housing sales.

The study says the answer instead can be found mostly in the makeup of the existing home market. For example, the median list price of a premium home across the U.S. is \$542,805, com-

pared with \$267,845 for a mid-priced home.

That gap is 17.3% higher than it was in 2012 and is keeping many midpriced homeowners from trading up, McLaughlin says.

McLaughlin partly blames a wealth gap that has seen the incomes of the top third of U.S. households climb more dramatically than those in the middle. And the supply of starter homes is limited because many investors snatched those up when prices hit bottom in 2011.

STATE-BY-STATE 4A TRAVEL 4B MARKETPLACE TODAY 5D PUZZLES 5D TONIGHT ON TV 6D WEATHER 6A YOUR SAY 6A



### Your small business doesn't take a spring break, so neither do we.

See how you can make the most of your time and grow your business at [fedex.com/smallbusiness](http://fedex.com/smallbusiness). #SolutionsThatMatter

© 2016 FedEx

## Read the pdf or click here to read online

Published March 21, 2016

PAGES 1A, 2A



# Lead taints drinking water in hundreds of schools, day cares across USA

Laura Ungar, *USA TODAY*

Whenever Jamison Rich got thirsty after gym or recess, he took a drink from the nearest water fountain at his elementary school.

Only last month did his family learn that the water bubbling out of some fountains contained high levels of lead, a notorious toxin that can silently damage developing brains and slow growth in little bodies like his.

Recently, a blood test on the 7-year-old found more than twice the average level of lead for young children, even though as far as anyone knows he's never come in contact with lead paint or tainted soil.

Jamison's school, Caroline Elementary in Ithaca, N.Y., is one of hundreds across the nation where children were exposed to water containing excessive amounts of an element doctors agree is unsafe at any level, a USA TODAY NETWORK investigation found. An analysis of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data showed about 350 schools and day-care centers failed lead tests a total of about 470 times from 2012 through 2015.

That represents nearly 20% of the water systems nationally testing above the agency's "action level" of 15 parts per billion.

One water sample at a Maine elementary school was 41 times higher while another at a Pennsylvania preschool was 14 times



ROMAIN BLANQUART, DETROIT FREE PRESS

**Nicole Rich, 34, helps her children Jamison, 7, and Jersey, 9, do homework in Ithaca, N.Y.**

higher. And a sink in a music-room bathroom at Caroline Elementary tested this year at 5,000 ppb of lead, results released by the school system show.

That's the cutoff where the EPA labels a substance "hazardous waste."

"It's a scary thing. Nobody expects to have this in their schools," said Jamison's mom, Nicole Rich. "Who knows how big the problem actually is?"

Researchers say it could be very, very big.

But at this point it's impossible to know how big because the federal government requires only about 10% of the nation's schools and a tiny fraction of day cares — the 8,225 facilities that run their own water systems — to test for lead at all.

The EPA estimates that about 90,000

public schools and half a million child-care facilities are not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act because they depend on water sources such as municipal utilities expected to test their own water. That means parents have no assurance lead isn't seeping into children's water from a school building's pipes, solder or fixtures.

In fact, many schools that have tested for lead voluntarily have found it, hinting at the true scope of the problem.

"There's a regulatory black hole when it comes to schools and day-care centers," said Yanna Lambrinidou, a Virginia Tech researcher who studies lead in water nationally. "In some ways, it's an official endorsement of exposure to lead and large-scale health harms that go undetected."

Babies and children also are left vulnerable at schools and day cares required to test for lead. The USA TODAY NETWORK investigation found spotty enforcement from the EPA and some state governments, as well school leaders' failures to test as often as required, notify parents about problems in a timely way or fix problems immediately in many cases.

Doctors stress that lead is a cumulative poison that builds up in the body and comes from several sources.

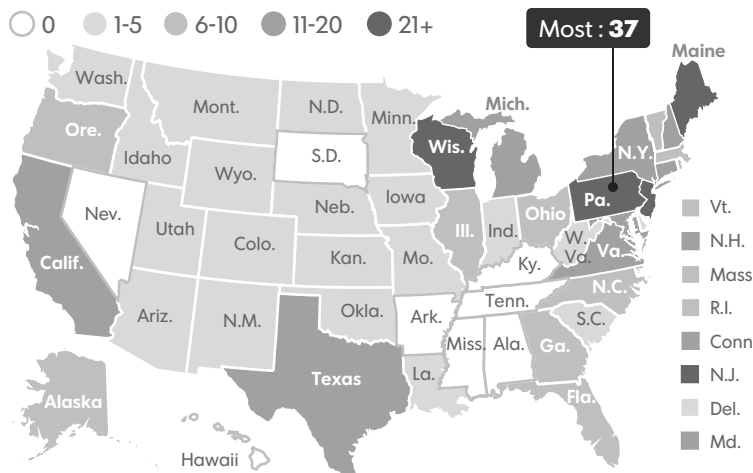
A groundbreaking study from Bruce Lanphear, a professor at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia who studied lead exposure among children in Rochester, N.Y., found that about 20% was attributed to water, 10% to 15% to contaminated soil and 20% to 30% from other sources such as paint dust. He adds that many variables and sources should be considered, and not everything can be explained.

Compounding the problem:

- Lead-tainted water isn't used just for drinking and washing. It's often used for cooking school lunches — where it can wind up in foods like pasta — or making infant formula, posing a particular risk to babies

**LEAD EXPOSURE IN SCHOOLS, DAY CARE CENTERS**

Number of water systems supplying schools and day care centers that had test samples showing high levels of lead from 2012 through 2015:



Source EPA data  
KARL GELLES, USA TODAY

because they consume so much water compared to their size.

- Lead concentrations can rise as water goes unused and stays in contact with plumbing since schools and day cares often are vacant for long stretches. Also, lead particles tend to release sporadically, so a child can go days drinking from a contaminated water fountain before ingesting the toxin.

"It's like Russian roulette," Lambrinidou said.

- Blood testing for lead poisoning is typically done in babies, not school-aged children. Symptoms usually don't show up until dangerous levels have accumulated and even then can be vague, so they often are missed until the damage — such as lowered IQ, behavior problems and developmental delays — has been done.

**Widespread threat, mixed response**

Given the dangers, the EPA recommends that schools and day-care centers test for lead even if they're not required to under the agency's Lead and Copper Rule and work to reduce the toxin. In an email response to questions from USA TODAY NETWORK, the EPA says these facilities serve sensitive populations, so the agency and states prioritize assisting those that test above actionable levels by helping



them collect samples and look into practices and equipment that could be causing high lead levels, such as old plumbing.

But a growing chorus of researchers, activists, parents and school officials say this isn't enough and that all schools and day cares should have to test for lead.

"Our children are drinking this water every day," Rich said. "The fact it doesn't always have to be tested kind of blows my mind."

"EPA regulations have not moved forward with the science," said President and CEO Ruth Ann Norton of Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, an anti-lead advocacy group. "These are our children. This is poison. ... It's a toxin being ingested, and that should never be OK under any circumstances."

Among schools and day cares required to test, the USA TODAY NETWORK analysis found problematic lead levels in 42 states. If more than 10% of samples are above 15 ppb, that triggers a water system to take action.

States with the most were Maine, with 44 samples taken from drinking fountains and faucets showing high lead levels at 26 facilities; Pennsylvania, with 43 samples testing high among 37 facilities; and New Jersey, with 34 high readings among 23 facilities. Some schools and day cares failed lead tests four or even five times.

Marc Edwards, a Virginia Tech civil engineering professor who helped uncover the water crisis in Flint, Mich., said Maine has particularly corrosive water, which can dissolve lead from plumbing systems. Regional School Unit 57, a rural district in southern Maine, has failed lead tests nine times among four schools in recent years with one sample registering 635 ppb in 2013 at Waterboro Elementary School, located a half hour's drive from Kennebunkport.

The district took Waterboro off its well and hooked it to municipal water three years ago, put in a water-filtration system at another school and replaced problematic faucets at several schools, Superintendent John Davis said. The system tests for lead regularly and notifies parents quickly.

"Typically, schools are very responsive," said Roger Crouse, Maine's drinking water program director.

But responses to lead problems are not always so efficient.

In Bucks County, Pa., one water sample in 2013 tested more than 14 times above the actionable level at Quakertown Christian School's preschool campus, a rural school in a small borough 50 miles north of Philadelphia. But not until two years later did school leaders turn off the drinking fountains and bring in bottled water for its 60 students and staff members.

Pennsylvania's state environmental protection department didn't suggest doing so earlier, and it wasn't required, said Bill Kirk, the school's interim executive director. The school took state officials' advice to change a faucet.

Lead tests taken in September again found high levels of lead. School officials sent a letter to families saying they were trying to minimize lead exposure by providing bottled water and replacing a well head pump and piping.

In Arizona, the USA TODAY NETWORK found that water providers didn't always conduct the required follow-up tests or notify customers when tests were flagged for high levels of lead.

A school district near Sedona didn't notify parents until February that a water fountain and a faucet in a preschool room tested in 2013 for high levels of lead in the water. A faucet in a church at a boarding school near the Navajo Reservation triggered an exceedance in 2013, but again no additional testing was done until last year, and no one was notified until last month.

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality didn't tell the boarding school to act until after a reporter asked for information about lead tests. The principal of Holbrook Seventh Day Adventist Indian School — located near Navajo Country and surrounded by quiet, windy, high-desert lands — said the first he had heard about a possible lead problem was a phone call in February from a state staffer.

"It was a bombshell," Principal Pedro Ojeda said, adding that the caller said, "You're going to get a letter, and this is going to get reported to the paper and even USA TODAY."

The school contracted with a private





ROMAIN BLANQUART, DETROIT FREE PRESS

**Melissa Hoffman, 40, with daughters Sareanda, 6, right, and Asyra, 10.**

consultant to test the water and submit results to the state, Ojeda said. Staff was not aware of the test results.

Tests were done after a volunteer's child fell ill with lead-poisoning symptoms, but they found no problems at that point, he said.

The elementary school near Sedona similarly received a letter from Arizona environmental officials about the results of its water sample showing high lead contamination just a couple of weeks after the USA TODAY NETWORK began asking questions. Although a follow-up test came back clear, that school is replacing pipes in the problem area.

Administrators at both schools said they plan to test for lead more often.

### **Parents told late**

Ithaca City School District, where young Jamison is in second grade, also failed to comply with EPA regulations — in this case parents weren't told about problems quickly so they could protect their kids.

The 5,500-student district is located in a small city that also is home to Cornell University and Ithaca College. Two district schools, Caroline and Enfield elementaries, run their own water systems and are required to test for lead while the other 10 are not because they are connected to municipal water.

A total of four samples from Caroline and Enfield tested above the EPA action level in

August and two in follow-up tests in January, according to fact sheets from the county health department.

Even though the first test results came back in September, parents didn't learn of the problem until February despite requirements to notify the public within 30 days.

Superintendent Luvelle Brown blames "internal and external communication problems" but wouldn't elaborate except to say personnel issues were involved. He said he wasn't told about results of the August tests until months afterward and shared them days after he learned them — adding he understands the gravity of the issue, since "my child drinks out of the faucets every day."

Parents complained about the delay at community meetings, and the district tested the water again at sinks and water fountains throughout Caroline and Enfield, finding numerous levels greater than 100 ppb, according to results the school system released. The highest was the 5,000 ppb sample from the music-room bathroom sink at Caroline.

Officials turned off drinking water sources at the two schools, made bottled water available throughout the district and began looking into what went wrong with the notification process. They also started to review water-sampling data from 2005 for Caroline and Enfield, as well as other district schools not required to test, Brown said.

He shared plans to test all district buildings and vowed to fix any problems, “whatever it takes.”

Amid the turmoil, Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., pushed for help from the EPA and recently announced the agency was sending lead experts to help the school system by assisting with tests of the water sources at Caroline and Enfield. In a March 3 letter to the community, the superintendent wrote, “Recent sampling procedures may have produced inaccurate results,” and the health department has advised re-testing.

Parents are incensed.

“My trust is completely gone in the district,” said Rich, who has two children at Caroline and a middle-schooler. The notification delay “took away our choice as parents to provide an alternative.”

Parent Melissa Hoffman agrees. She has three children in the district, and said her daughter, Sareanda, used to drink every day from a water fountain in her kindergarten classroom that measured high for lead.

“No amount of lead is safe,” Hoffman said. “We just don’t know what has been done to our children.”

Her 10-year-old Asyra, a fourth-grader, also drank from a water fountain that tested high for lead, she said. She didn’t show any signs of sickness, but Sareanda used to come home with a rash around her mouth and so tired she needed a long nap.

Doctors say fatigue can be a sign of lead poisoning but a rash isn’t typical although Flint residents also have reported them.

Hoffman said tests for lead in her daughters’ blood came back normal, but she’s still concerned because doctors say lead can be missed if too much time elapses between the exposure and the blood test. Both girls are now drinking bottled water, and Hoffman said Sareanda no longer comes home from school exhausted, and her rash has cleared up.

But Rich wonders about long-term harm to Jamison. The active boy, who runs around a lot and often gets thirsty, was the only one of her children found to have lead in his blood. He’s at twice the average for lead in his blood and just barely under the level that the federal government considers elevated.

Rich said her water at home tested below 15 ppb for lead and she has no lead paint there, so the likely culprit is the water at school.

### **Voluntary testing uncovers lead**

Observers say high lead levels among the mostly small schools and day-care centers required to test are alarming enough. But voluntary testing at larger schools provides troubling evidence that the lead problem may be much bigger than what the EPA exceedance numbers suggest.

Longstanding lead issues have arisen in some of the nation’s biggest cities, including Washington, D.C.; and Baltimore. According to a 2010 article by Lambrinidou, Edwards and a co-author in the journal *New Solutions*, Baltimore City Public Schools first became aware of lead-in-water contamination in 1992. Drinking fountains were shut off but school administrators unaware of the problem later turned them back on.

After future testing also found high levels of lead, the school system decided on a long-term strategy to use bottled water.

Early this month, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection advised Newark Public Schools to use alternate drinking-water sources after voluntary tests found elevated levels of lead in 30 of 67 district schools. Measurements ranged from 16 to 558 ppb, according to 2015-16 results posted on the department’s website. The school system temporarily shut off all drinking fountains in affected schools, posted warnings in bathrooms not to drink water from faucets, and brought in water coolers and bottled water.

Other schools not required to test have decided to do so in wake of the Flint crisis, uncovering problems of their own.

The Indiana School for the Deaf in Indianapolis sampled its water this year “out of an abundance of caution” and found two water fountains with high levels: one initially testing at 130 ppb and the other at 519 ppb. Both were taken out of service with plans to replace them.

Binghamton City Schools in New York also voluntarily decided to correct lead-in-water problems in February, prompted in

part because of issues in nearby Ithaca. Superintendent Marion Martinez had learned the district completed testing in 2013, but nothing was done about locations found to be in excess of 15 ppb, and the final report included no recommendations.

After Martinez got a copy of the report, the district shut down seven drinking-water sources flagged as having high lead levels. Five have since been repaired, flushed, retested and come in below 15 ppb, and two more remain shut off.

The district now plans to label which are safe to use for drinking

“We don’t have a state or federal legal requirement to test the water, but we have a moral requirement,” Martinez said. “Going into the future, we commit ourselves to testing our drinking water sources every three years. We are obligating ourselves to do that.”

### Getting the lead out

EPA officials say they not only encourage voluntary testing but provide guidance to schools and day cares that want to do it while also helping those required to test stay in compliance.

Plumbing materials that contain lead make the agency’s goal of zero lead unreachable, officials said. Regulations help water systems move in the right direction by requiring those with problems to control corrosion and reduce lead in tap water “to the extent feasible.”

In a way, “the violations are the good news. Those schools are testing” and correcting problems, Virginia Tech’s Edwards said. “The ones you should be worried about

**BY THE NUMBERS:  
LEAD IN DRINKING WATER**

- 104 PPB TO 13,200 PPB** Levels of lead in parts per billion in the tap water of a home in Flint, Mich., in early 2014.
- 40  
PPB

Level listed on EPA website from 2002 to 2004 as posing an **“imminent and substantial endangerment to the health of children and pregnant women.”**
- 27  
PPB

In Flint, Mich., **more than 10%** of first-draw tap water samples tested by Virginia Tech scientists contained **at least this much lead.**
- 18  
PPB

For infants fed formula reconstituted with tap water, this level was estimated in a study to result in **50% of exposed children** having blood-lead levels above the current CDC level of concern.
- 15  
PPB

**EPA “action level”** for water systems to assess corrosion control. CDC advises children, pregnant women use bottled or filtered water.
- 5  
PPB

**Maximum lead contamination** allowed by the FDA in **bottled water.** Considered a level posing health concerns by some scientists.
- 0  
PPB

Non-enforceable EPA **maximum-contaminant-level goal** for lead in drinking water.

Source USA TODAY NETWORK research  
KARL GELLES, USA TODAY

are ... the vast majority of schools not required to test. There, you can have any level of lead.”

Lambrinidou agreed, adding that regulations are fine as far as they go, but there is “a nationwide lack of enforcement.” Many schools also don’t fully understand how lead gets into water or how to test correctly for it, she said.

Even the way action-level exceedances are calculated is problematic because up to 10% of samples can be above 15 ppb of lead, which “allows for 10% of (locations tested) to dispense any concentration of lead whatsoever,” Lambrinidou said.

Another obstacle to dealing with lead-in-water problems is that permanent solutions can be expensive.

The tiny one-school Klondike Independent School District, which sits amid a cotton patch in Lamesa, Texas, plans to replace its entire water system at a cost of \$600,000. Superintendent Steve McLaren called the

expense “a big chunk of our money.”

McLaren said he’s concerned about how high lead levels might affect students and understands the need to take action.

“I’m always concerned about their health,” he said. “I think we’re doing the best we can with the finances we have.”

Conley Elementary, a rural New Jersey school with five action-triggering water samples from 2012 through 2014, tried several fixes before finding one that worked. School leaders shut down water fountains and cafeteria sinks and began using bottled water for drinking and cooking, attempted to make the water less corrosive, then

finally decided to re-pipe the entire system out to the well at a cost of \$187,000.

Edwards said he understands many facilities are strapped for cash, but “there’s a law, and we have to follow it.” He points out that not all remedies are expensive: Some water filters cost only \$20, and even designating taps as drinking or non-drinking can be temporary fixes.

Norton, with the anti-lead group, said she would like to see tax credits, grants and loans made available to schools and day cares seeking to tackle lead problems because the human cost of failing to address them is too high.

“We see learning difficulties, hyperactivity, developmental delays,” said Marcie Billings, a pediatrician with Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. “Any damage is irreversible.”

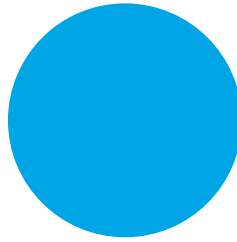
And while the dangers of lead are clear, some researchers say it’s not clear how big a part lead-tainted water plays in overall lead exposure, especially since so many schools and day cares don’t have to test for it.

“We don’t really know the collateral damage that’s being caused by lead in water,” Norton said. “We must address this as a society. We’re all better off with children who can read better because they haven’t been harmed by lead. We all benefit when children are healthy.”

---

Contributing: John R. Roby, (Binghamton, N.Y.) Press & Sun Bulletin; Russ Zimmer, Asbury Park (N.J.) Press; Alison Young and Mark Nichols, USA TODAY; Caitlin McGlade, The Arizona Republic; Ed Mahon, York (Pa.) Daily Record.





USA TODAY 12.14.16



Pretty decent 'Rogue One' underwhelms

Review: ★★★ 'Star Wars' misses chance to be remarkable.

IN LIFE

JONATHAN OLLEY

NEWSLINE

IN NEWS



Aleppo civilians facing execution U.N. says Syrian forces killing women, children

Trump business plans alarm ethics watchdogs President-elect pledges 'no new deals'

IN MONEY

Dow hits record; nears 20,000 Index comes within 47 points of milestone

Hatchimals this year's must-have Elusive toy driving parents to distraction

IN SPORTS

Boycotts looming, Russia loses sliding event Athletes express doping concerns



Westbrook flirts with rare feat Thunder star averaging a triple-double

IN LIFE

Actor Alan Thicke dead at 69 'Growing Pains' star died of heart attack

HOME DELIVERY 1-800-872-0001 USATODAYSERVICE.COM



USA SNAPSHOTS\*

All the way down under



105 years ago today, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen became the first person to reach the South Pole.

SOURCE The History Place MICHAEL B. SMITH AND PAUL TRAP, USA TODAY

LEAD IN YOUR WATER A USA TODAY NETWORK INVESTIGATION

4 MILLION AMERICANS COULD BE DRINKING TOXIC WATER

Broken system traps millions in rural areas with poisoned or untested tap water

Laura Ungar and Mark Nichols | USA TODAY

RANGER, TEXAS

The leaders of this former oil boomtown never gave 2-year-old Adam Walton a chance to avoid the poison. It came in city water, delivered to his family's tap through pipes nearly a century old. For almost a year, the little boy bathed in lead-tainted water and ate food cooked in it. As he grew into a toddler — when he should have been learning to talk — he drank tap water containing a toxin known to ravage a child's developing brain. Adam's parents didn't know about the danger until this fall.

Officials at City Hall knew long before then, according to local and state records. So did state and federal government regulators who are paid to make sure drinking water in Texas and across the nation is clean. Ranger and Texas officials were aware of a citywide lead problem for two years — one the city still hasn't fixed and one the Waltons first learned about in a letter to residents in September. The city and state even knew, from recent tests, that water in the Walton family's cramped, one-bedroom rental house near the railroad tracks carried sky-high levels of lead. Destiny and John Walton got their first inkling of a problem when blood tests in June detected high levels of lead in their son's growing body. They first learned that their tap water contained lead — about 28 times the federal limit — when a USA TODAY Network reporter told them in early November.



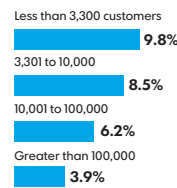
Adam Walton, 2, has high levels of lead in his blood and lives in a house in Ranger, Texas, where the water tested high for lead.

Millions of Americans face

STORY CONTINUES ON 4A

TINY UTILITIES, BIG PROBLEMS

Percentage of customers with lead in their drinking water by utility size. (Testing done January 2010 to June 2016)



SOURCE EPA Safe Drinking Water Information System database reports, Q3, 2016. ISABELLA LUCY, USA TODAY

NOW SHOWING AT USATODAY.COM

Learn more about Ranger, Texas.

100,000 people get their drinking water from utilities that discovered high lead but failed to treat the water to remove it

4 MILLION Americans get water from small operators who skipped required tests or did not conduct the tests properly

\$5 MILLION The cost to test every small water utility that missed even one test



Fans entering Seattle's CenturyLink Field are scanned by security before an NFL preseason game in 2013.

Stadiums are a place for games — not guns

Nancy Armour narmour@usatoday.com USA TODAY Sports

Some people will do anything to get their names in the news. Even if it comes at the expense of the public's safety. Three Washington state legislators are pushing a bill that would force arenas and stadiums to allow fans to bring in weapons if they have concealed carry permits. Because adding guns to a highly charged atmosphere where alcohol already offsets common sense far too often seems like a great idea.

There was no public groundswell for this proposed legislation. Seattle's professional teams did not ask for it, and the major professional leagues have rules that specifically prohibit fans

“What I've been trying to do is foster bipartisan support for common sense solutions to gun violence,” said Laurie Jinkins, the Tacoma area representative who chairs the Washington House Judiciary Committee. “This seems to be the antithesis for that.”

“The incoming administration can afford to lose the support of only two Republican senators for any confirmation vote, provided no Democrats cross the aisle, which appears unlikely. Republican

STORY CONTINUES ON 2A

Tillerson, other Trump picks face extreme vetting

Administration can't afford to lose many Republican votes

Donovan Slack @donovanslack USA TODAY

WASHINGTON Donald Trump's choice of ExxonMobil chief Rex Tillerson to be secretary of State is the first of his picks to draw sharp questions from Republicans in the Senate, a sign that his nomination may face the highest hurdles in the confirmation process. Tillerson may not be the only one facing a tough road to Trump's Cabinet.



Rex Tillerson

Sens. Marco Rubio of Florida, John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina expressed reservations about Tillerson, in particular about his ties with Russia, the nation intelligence officials suspect of hacking and trying to influence the presidential election.

“Based upon his extensive business dealings with the Putin government and his previous opposition of efforts to impose sanctions on the Russian government, there are many questions which must be answered,” Graham said Tuesday. “I expect the U.S.-Russian relationship to be front and center in his confirmation process.”

Trump held up Tillerson's experience with Russia as an asset in his selection announcement. The statement lists his positions at Exxon since Tillerson began

STORY CONTINUES ON 2A

STATE-BY-STATE 6B AMERICA'S MARKETS 4B MARKETPLACE TODAY 5D PUZZLES 5D TONIGHT ON TV 6D WEATHER 6A YOUR SAY 6A

Read the pdf or click here to read online

Published December 14, 2016

PAGES 1A, 4A, 5A



 **LEAD IN YOUR WATER**  
A USA TODAY NETWORK INVESTIGATION



LAURA UNGAR, USA TODAY

**Adam Walton, 2, has high levels of lead in his blood and lives in a house in Ranger, Texas, where the water tested high for lead.**

# 4 million Americans could be drinking toxic water and would never know

Laura Ungar and Mark Nichols, *USA TODAY Network*

RANGER, Texas — The leaders of this former oil boomtown never gave 2-year-old Adam Walton a chance to avoid the poison.

It came in city water, delivered to his family's tap through pipes nearly a century old. For almost a year, the little boy bathed in lead-tainted water and ate food cooked in it. As he grew into a toddler — when he should have been learning to talk — he

drank tap water containing a toxin known to ravage a child's developing brain.

Adam's parents didn't know about the danger until this fall.

Officials at City Hall knew long before then, according to local and state records. So did state and federal government regulators who are paid to make sure drinking water in Texas and across the nation is clean. Ranger

and Texas officials were aware of a citywide lead problem for two years -- one the city still hasn't fixed and one the Waltons first learned about in a September letter to residents. The city and state even knew, from recent tests, that water in the Walton family's cramped, one-bedroom rental house near the railroad tracks was carrying sky-high levels of lead.

Destiny and John Walton got their first inkling of a problem when blood tests in June detected high levels of lead in their son's growing body. They first learned that their tap water contained lead — about 28 times the federal limit — when a USA TODAY Network reporter told them in early November.

Millions of Americans face similar risks because the nation's drinking-water enforcement system doesn't make small utilities play by the same safety rules as everyone else, a USA TODAY Network investigation has found.

Tiny utilities - those serving only a few thousand people or less - don't have to treat water to prevent lead contamination until after lead is found. Even when they skip safety tests or fail to treat water after they find lead, federal and state regulators often do not force them to comply with the law.

USA TODAY Network journalists spent 2016 reviewing millions of records from the Environmental Protection Agency and all 50 states, visiting small communities across the country and interviewing more than 120 people stuck using untested or lead-tainted tap water.

The investigation found:

- About 100,000 people get their drinking water from utilities that discovered high lead but failed to treat the water to remove it. Dozens of utilities took more than a year to formulate a treatment plan and even longer to begin treatment.
- Some 4 million Americans get water from small operators who skipped required tests or did not conduct the tests properly, violating a cornerstone of federal safe drinking water laws. The testing is required because, without it, utilities, regulators and people drinking the water can't know if it's safe. In more than 2,000 communities, lead tests

## 100,000

people get their drinking water from utilities that discovered high lead but failed to treat the water to remove it

## 4 MILLION

Americans get water from small operators who skipped required tests or did not conduct the tests properly

## \$5 MILLION

The cost to test every small water utility that missed even one test

were skipped more than once. Hundreds repeatedly failed to properly test for five or more years.

- About 850 small water utilities with a documented history of lead contamination — places where state and federal regulators are supposed to pay extra attention — have failed to properly test for lead at least once since 2010.

This two-tiered system exists in both law and practice. State and federal water-safety officials told USA TODAY Network reporters that regulators are more lenient with small water systems because they lack resources, deeming some lost causes when they don't have the money, expertise or motivation to fix problems. The nation's Safe Drinking Water Act allows less-trained, often amateur, people to operate tiny water systems even though the risks for people drinking the water are the same.

Officials in West Virginia, for example, labeled more than a dozen systems "orphans" because they didn't have owners or operators. Enforcement efforts for those utilities amounted to little more than a continuous stream of warning letters as utilities failed to test year after year. All the while, residents continued drinking untested — and potentially contaminated — water.

"At the end of the day, it creates two universes of people," said water expert Yanna Lambrinidou, an affiliate faculty member at Virginia Tech. "One is the universe of people who are somewhat protected from lead. ... Then we have those people served by small water systems, who are treated by



the regulations as second-class citizens.”

All of this endangers millions of people across the country, mostly in remote and rural communities. Utilities like East Mooringsport Water, serving part of a bayou town of about 800 people, where drinking water went untested for more than five years. Or Coal Mountain, W.Va., a remote 118-person outpost where a retired coal miner pours bleach into untested water at the system’s wellhead in hope of keeping it clean.

Or Orange Center School outside Fresno, Calif., where for more than a decade regulators let about 320 grade-school kids drink water that had tested high for lead.

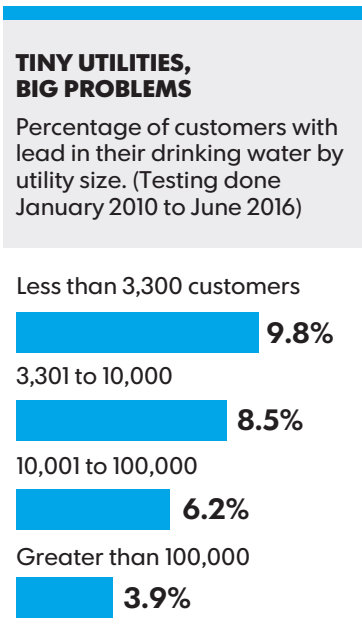
Individually, the communities served by small utilities seem tiny. But together, the number of people getting lead-contaminated drinking water, or water not properly tested for lead, since 2010 is about 5 million.

Virginia Tech’s Marc Edwards, one of the nation’s top experts on lead in drinking water who helped identify the crisis in Flint, Mich., laments that people in America’s forgotten places — rural outposts, post-industrial communities and poor towns — are most at risk from the dangers of lead exposure, such as irreversible brain damage, lowered IQ, behavioral problems and language delays.

Edwards said the effects of lead poisoning could make it even more difficult for families in these communities to climb out of poverty. “I’m worried about their kids,” he said. “The risk of permanent harm here is horrifying. These are America’s children.”

The Waltons fear lead has already harmed their son. At an age when other kids use dozens of words, Adam says just three: “mama,” “dada” and “no.” Destiny and John wish they would have known about the lead earlier so they could have protected him.

“What’s going to happen if my son’s lead



**SOURCE** EPA Safe Drinking Water Information System database reports, Q3, 2016.  
ISABELLA LUCY, USA TODAY

levels keep rising? What if the kid next door gets way sicker than my son? What’s Ranger going to do then?” Destiny asked. “They’ve known about it for years now. ... Are they going to fix it?”

## Tiny Flint

Where everything breaks down at once

Perhaps the best illustration of what can happen when everything breaks down at once is Ranger, where high lead and government inaction have

converged in a pervasive contamination problem experts compared to a “tiny Flint.”

Ranger’s water system dates to the city’s heyday nearly 100 years ago, when the discovery of oil attracted a population that historians say reached 30,000. Ranger is now a barren place with 2,500 people, abandoned buildings and a lonely Main Street where a mural of a steer-wrangling cowboy near an oil well fades away like the city.

With ever-shrinking tax rolls and median household income at about half the national average, there’s little money to shore up a decaying infrastructure. Leaks spring daily.

Many residents rely on bottled water. They’ve heard through the grapevine that the city’s water might be unhealthy. They can see for themselves it’s not always clean. While lead is colorless and odorless, algae in the water is not.

“Some days, it’s more brown than green. It smells sort of like a sewer,” said Vietnam veteran Bill Brister, who spends about \$70 a month on bottled water. “We don’t even give the dogs tap water.”

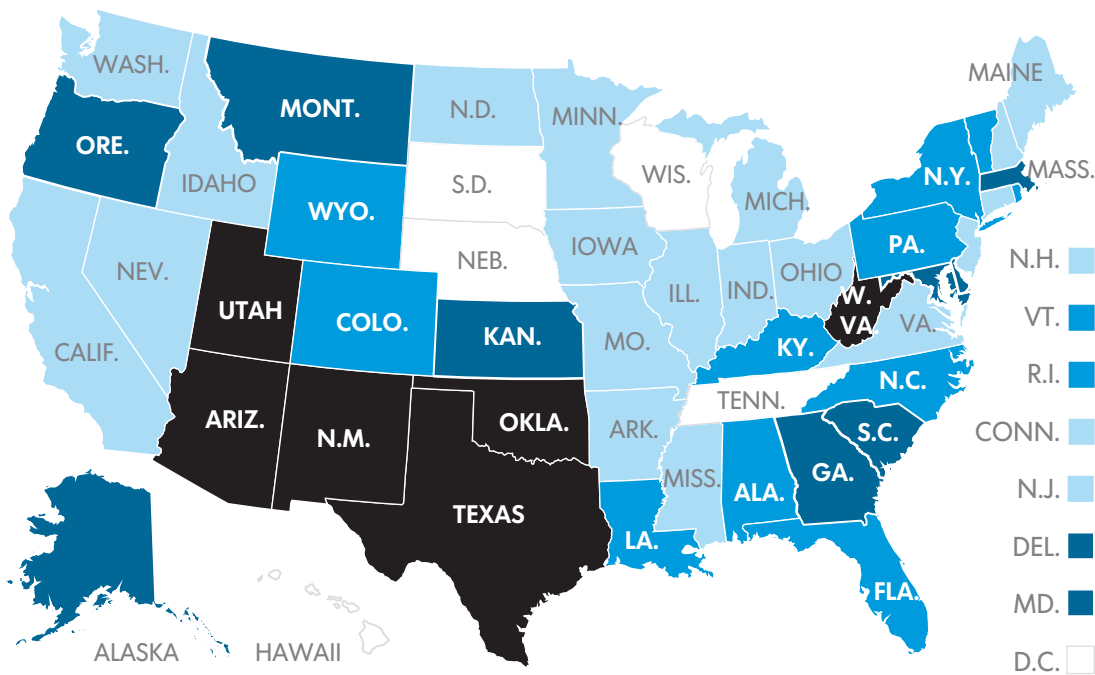
Three years ago, the city found excessive levels of copper. Nine months after that, three of 20 sites tested over the limit of 15 parts per billion of lead. Under federal law, both required immediate action, but documents show the city waited until this fall to start planning to control corrosion.



### CUSTOMERS DRAWING WATER FROM UTILITIES WITH FAILED LEAD TESTS

Percentage of each state's small water-utility customers who draw water from a system that has failed to properly test for lead since 2010:

● More than 20% ● 20% to 10.1% ● 10% to 5.1% ● 5 to 2.1% ● Less than 2%



**SOURCE** EPA Safe Drinking Water Information System database reports, Q3, 2016.  
ISABELLA LUCY, USA TODAY

Testing this September found five sites above the limit for lead, the Walton home topping the list at 418 parts per billion. The federal limit is 15.

Similar scenarios play out in hundreds of mostly struggling communities — cities built on boom-bust industries like oil and coal, isolated rural places and mobile home parks housing the poorest people in town.

Ranger is one of about 130 water systems since 2010 that failed to take timely action, and one of dozens that took a year or more to start the treatment process.

City Manager Chad Roberts said Texas environmental officials pushed hard this fall after USA TODAY Network reporters visited Ranger and began asking questions. State officials insist the push came after a weekly review found that Ranger met EPA criteria for the state to take formal enforcement action.

Ranger took its first step toward reducing lead in November — nearly three years late — by giving the state a corrosion-control study that called for adjusting the pH of the

water. State officials deemed the plan insufficient, however, and are working with the city to improve it.

As the city formulates its plan, residents continue to drink water that might be dangerous.

A boil notice was in effect in early November when Kay Hodges, 23, said she drank straight from the tap because she was nine months' pregnant, dehydrated and out of bottled water. "I got really sick. I was throwing up all night," she said.

Hodges lives with her fiancé and young children in a low-income housing complex called Austin Acres. A tap at the complex has repeatedly tested high for lead, most recently at more than twice the federal limit. Hodges figures she should now get checked for the toxin.

Others fear lead exposure, too. Anita Baker, a 79-year-old colon cancer survivor in Austin Acres, has been using city water for cooking and making coffee but plans to stop after learning from a reporter that boiling the water concentrates the lead.

The Waltons — who squeeze into their one-bedroom home by putting the master bed in the living room — also drank lots of city water, in iced tea, Kool-Aid, diluted juice and by itself. Adam’s highest blood lead reading was more than three times the federal cutoff to be considered elevated, and his 1-year-old brother, Andrew, also had slightly elevated lead levels.

Texas environmental officials say they have taken steps to speed Ranger’s response. They sent experts to Ranger, referred the city to the EPA for formal enforcement in March, issued new citations in October and fined the city about \$3,000.

The city raised water rates to pay for improvements and now promises to replace more of the old water lines, increase testing and seek grants for more upgrades.

“We are good with the state right now,” Mayor Joe Pilgrim said, “and that’s all that matters.”

Still, residents may have to wait years for clean water. After the state approves a reworked corrosion-control study, Ranger has two years before it must start treating its water. By then, Adam Walton will be almost ready for kindergarten.

## Double standard

Playing by a different set of rules

It’s easy to see why a place like Ranger winds up with toxic water when you compare it to a typical large water system like the one in Louisville, Ky.

Louisville Water has about 435 full-time staffers, including a director of water quality and production with a Ph.D. in environmental engineering. Ranger has seven public works employees.

Louisville Water has an operating and maintenance budget of \$127 million. Ranger’s entire city budget is \$3.2 million.

The top salary for water quality employees at Louisville Water is \$141,276. Most of Ranger’s public works department employees earn from \$8.50 to \$12 an hour.

Some small utilities are even worse off.

In Colorado, near Black Canyon, the man in charge of providing safe water to 335 people is a farmer who spends most of his



**A small shed houses components of the water system for Coal Mountain, W.Va. Ravin Kenneda, 65, pours bleach into his community’s water every so often to keep it clean.**

time tending to livestock, wheat, oats and barley.

In West Texas, at Klondike Independent School District, water safety is handled by Superintendent Steve McLaren, whose first job is running a one-building school system serving 260 students. He wears many hats in the district amid cotton fields; he’s been known to drive a school bus from time to time.

McLaren acknowledged he skipped required testing for lead and copper in fall 2014 because “some things just slip by.” When Klondike did test last year, it found excessive lead in both rounds of testing.

Generally, the bar for running tiny water systems is low. Certification for hands-on operators varies by state and typically involves passing an exam and getting ongoing continuing education credits. Some states require licensing but with varying qualifications. Minimum requirements in Texas, for instance, are a high school diploma or GED and a training course in basic water operations. No experience necessary.

“You might have to get more training to run a hot dog stand than a small water

system,” said Paul Schwartz with the Campaign for Lead Free Water, a group of people and organizations working to get lead out of drinking water.

Many states, and the EPA, offer extra guidance and instruction. But not everyone avails themselves of this help, leaving many small operators with “a complete lack of training,” Lambrinidou said. “Sometimes, they’re cheating and they don’t know they’re cheating.”

Some government funding is available for struggling utilities. EPA’s Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, which includes a state contribution, has provided \$32.5 billion through 2016 to water systems that applied for help. Another EPA program awards millions each year to non-profit organizations that provide training and technical assistance to small, public water systems. The U.S. Department of Agriculture also offers loans and grants.

Edwards and others say the need far outstrips the money, and loans aren’t helpful to utilities that can’t pay them back. An EPA assessment from 2013 estimates infrastructure needs for small water systems will total \$64.5 billion over 20 years. The revolving fund’s 2016 allocation, for systems of all sizes, was less than \$1 billion, and a Congressional Research Service report on the fund in November concluded that “a substantial gap remains between financing needs and available funds.”

Recognizing resource constraints, the federal government lets small water systems play by more lenient rules.

Scattered throughout EPA regulations on lead and copper are specific provisions for small water systems. While utilities serving 50,000 or more people must always control corrosion, for example, smaller systems don’t have to even plan for such treatment when lead is below the federal limit for two consecutive six-month periods. And they can discontinue treatment once lead drops below the limit.

Utilities serving 3,300 or fewer can, if they meet certain criteria, test for lead as little as once every nine years.

Experts say such regulations make it easy for lead problems to go undetected and

uncorrected in the very places that are most vulnerable to contamination.

“You might think we have a lead in water law,” Edwards said. “What we have is a national joke.”

## Untested water

### 4 million living with an unknown

A cornerstone of those 25-year-old lead regulations is testing. But the USA TODAY Network found that 9,000 small water systems together serving almost 4 million people failed to test properly for lead in the past six years, meaning the toxin could be there without anyone knowing. More than a quarter of those systems had repeat lead-testing violations.

EPA acknowledges it gives higher priority to immediate public health issues like acute contamination than testing violations.

Money is a factor in skipping lead tests, which can cost around \$50 per tap. Utilities must test from five to 20 locations, depending on how many customers they serve. A USA TODAY Network analysis found it would cost about \$1.2 million to check the water served by every small utility that failed to test twice since 2010. Lead testing for every small water utility that missed even one test would cost around \$5 million.

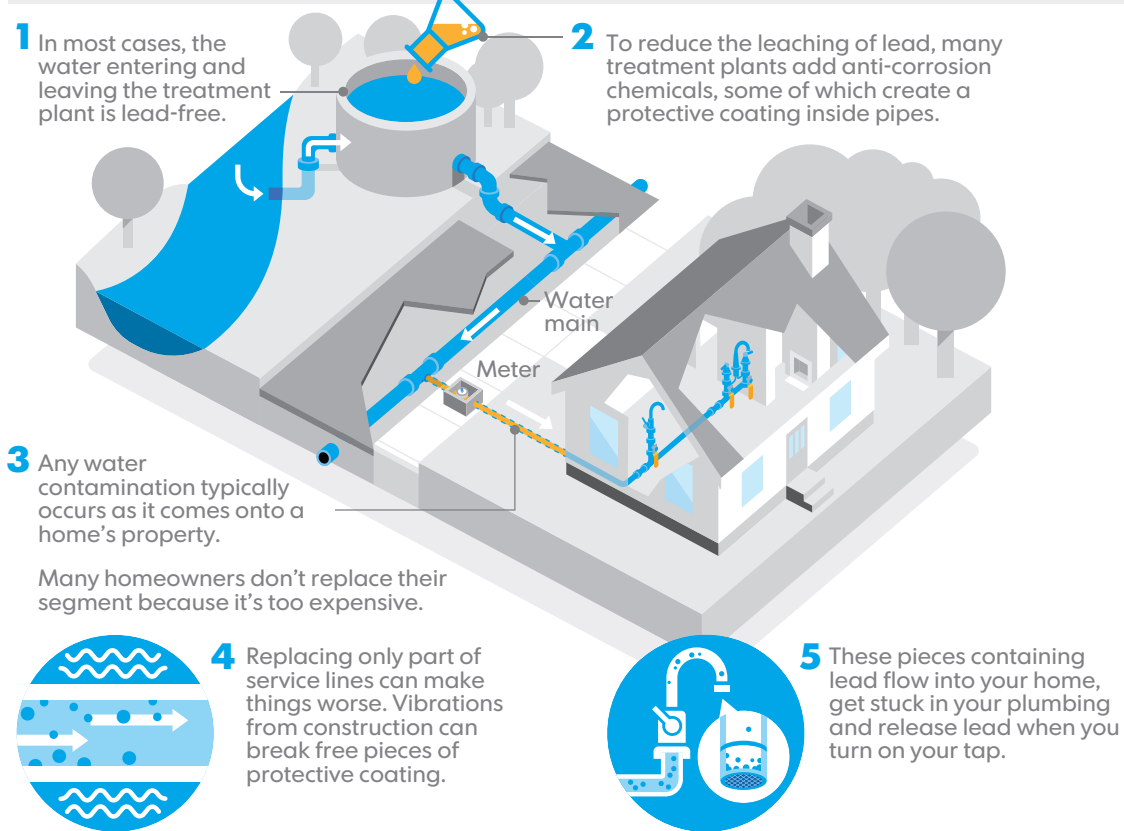
Ranger admits in a letter to residents to three years of skipped or incomplete tests. Roberts, who started as city manager in the spring, blamed lack of expertise and previous neglect, saying “the ball got dropped for sure.”

It also got dropped at Orange Center School in California, which skipped testing for nine years — even after finding excessive lead in 2003. In the rural neighborhood outside Fresno, officials in charge let the kids keep drinking the water for more than a decade.

State officials threatened to fine the school, but records show no more lead tests were done until 2012 and no action was taken. Three of those tests again found high lead. Two more years went by before California officials ordered the school to stop using the water and began shipping bottled water to students, while the school waits to be connected to the much-larger Fresno water system.

**HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO YOUR DRINKING WATER?**

More than 7 million U.S. homes are estimated to have service lines made of lead that can leach into water. Millions more homes built before 1986 have solder and fixtures that can leach lead.



Source USA TODAY NETWORK research  
KARL GELLES, USA TODAY

Customers of East Mooringsport Water in Louisiana, are also waiting to hook up to a larger water system after at least five years of skipped tests.

“Honestly, we just didn’t have the money to do (testing),” said Edward “Pat” Turnley, who distributes monthly water bills to the 90 East Mooringsport customers. “We’re barely hanging on here.”

The state cracked down several times, ordering the district to test three years ago and fining the community more than \$43,500. But little changed. Finally, in late June, the state tested nine homes itself, and found lead contamination in two. More testing will need to be done to determine the extent of the problem.

East Mooringsport buys treated water from the nearby town of Blanchard, then stores it in old tanks. Resident Gladys McCauslin suspects sediment in the tanks is what makes her tap water brownish and gritty. Residents are warned to boil it before drinking or cooking.

“It makes me feel like I’m in a Third World country,” said McCauslin, 75.

McCauslin hopes things will change when Blanchard, which has a new, \$17 million water treatment plant, acquires her community’s water system. As she waits for the merger, she keeps doing what she’s done for years — paying the bill for untested tap water while shelling out extra money for bottled water to drink and filtered, purified water for bathing.

Residents in remote Coal Mountain, W.Va., have gone as long as anyone can remember with untested, questionable water. No one knows what contaminants it might contain.

**Orphan systems**

Regulators have given up on some places

Their wellhead is housed near a church, in a shed cluttered with empty bleach bottles. They’ve been left behind by Ravin Kennedy, a 65-year-old with a salt-and-pepper



mustache and a baseball cap, who pours bleach into his community's water once in a while to keep it clean.

"It's just stuff I've learned down through the years," he said from his front-porch swing as his granddaughter sipped bottled water.

Though he's no water expert, he concedes, "Someone's got to do it."

State and federal governments have pretty much given up on enforcing safe-drinking-water rules here and in similarly tough cases, leaving residents to fend for themselves.

Coal Mountain's tap water comes from a coal company well abandoned in the 1980s. Water is pumped up the mountainside to an old storage tank hidden amid tangled trees, then flows down to homes. It's the subject of 19 water-testing violations since 1988, the most in the nation.

"We don't know what's in it," said Mila Darnell, 62, who is raising two 17-year-old grandsons with her retired coal miner husband. "I'm very concerned about lead or whatever else could be in there."

No doubt something is awry; the water stains the Darnells' clothes, stops up their shower head and sometimes smells like fish. Although they won't drink it, they do use it for cooking — boiling it first and hoping no one gets sick.

West Virginian officials say they can't do much beyond sending out advisories and issuing notices about water-testing violations because Coal Mountain has no owner or operator. The state labels Coal Mountain and about 15 other utilities "orphan systems."

"This happens, actually, across the country. We try to work with them, but the problem is finding someone who's responsible," said Walter Ivey, director of the West Virginia health department's Office of Environmental Health Services.

One option is for states to test the water. But Jon Capacasa, director of EPA's Region 3 Water Protection Division, said that the law calls for utilities to monitor for lead and report results to states, and that the obligation lies with them.

When utilities can't or won't, however, they often face little if any real punishment.

Notices and orders were EPA's weapons against Coal Mountain's lead-testing

violations for five years — after which nothing changed and West Virginia asked that no further federal action be taken.

Water-quality advocates say residents deserve better.

Government "owes it to these people to at least provide clean drinking water," said Wyoming County Clerk Mike Goode, adding that the county is working on a proposal to help Coal Mountain. "It's bad. These people live in America. They have a right to good water."

But Mila Darnell laments that such rights don't always extend to poor, rural Americans like her.

"We're a forgotten people," she said. "It hurts to feel ... like you just don't count."

## 'No responsible party'

Accountable officials  
minimizing danger

Roberts, the city manager, downplayed the danger from Ranger's water. Roberts said small children and pregnant women probably shouldn't drink it (as the city said in a letter to residents). He said overall, "I don't see a problem with drinking (it.) I drink it. ... I don't think it's a health alert serious enough for an emergency."

Roberts blamed much of the lead problem on homeowners' pipes, although he acknowledged the city's distribution system contains lead pipes as well.

Pilgrim, Ranger's mayor, agreed the water isn't unsafe, saying his city "has never put any of their people in danger. ... It's not an ongoing medical disaster to anyone in town for any reason."

They are far from the only officials to minimize water problems.

Kentucky's Peter Goodmann, who directs the division of water there, used a similar rationale to defend many years of inaction when a tiny water system without an owner refused to test for contaminants. "There's not much we could do because there's no responsible party," Goodmann said of Kettle Island Water, which was recently downgraded from a public water system because it's gotten so small. "Nobody's dying there, and there doesn't seem to be any public health effects."

The EPA would not allow senior officials including Peter Grevatt, director of the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, to be interviewed. The agency would respond only in writing to questions, saying it's revising lead regulations, working with states to strengthen protections and oversight, and remains committed to "vigorous civil and criminal enforcement to protect public health." On Nov. 30, the EPA released a drinking water "action plan" that includes proposed steps to help tiny water utilities comply with the drinking water laws, such as guidance to help them find money for needed improvements and updated certification guidelines for people operating them.

For now, lead continues to taint tap water

in places like Ranger. Katelyn Peters, who lives next door to the Waltons, doesn't see anything changing soon.

"This is where I was raised. This is where I was planning on raising my kids," she said, watching three of her four kids chase each other in the front yard, wondering if the water could be slowly poisoning the town's kids. "Now, I'm terrified. I would live anywhere else."

---

Contributing: Lex Talamo of The Shreveport (La.) Times and Caitlin McGlade. Talamo reported from Mooringsport, La. McGlade reported from Ranger, Tex. Nichols reported from Indianapolis. Ungar reported from Ranger, Coal Mountain, W.Va., and Louisville.

**USA TODAY WEEKEND**



NFL DRAFT  
**PROBABLE NO. 1 PICK SEEN AS RESILIENT**  
Despite setbacks, Jared Goff finds a way to shine  
**IN SPORTS**

JENNIFER BUCHANAN, USA TODAY SPORTS



JUNE 7, 1958 - APRIL 21, 2016

**PRINCE**

JONATHAN DANIEL, GETTY IMAGES

**Artist who turned music on its ear is dead at 57**

Jayne Deerwester | @jaymedeerwester | USA TODAY

Prince, a game-changer in popular music, died Thursday at his Paisley Park compound in the Minneapolis suburb of Chanhassen. He was 57. Carver County Sheriff Jim Olson said Thursday that deputies and medics were sent to Paisley Park around 9:43 a.m. CT, where they found the singer unresponsive in an elevator. Attempts to revive him failed, and he was pronounced dead at 10:07 a.m. "It is with profound sadness

that I am confirming that the legendary, iconic performer Prince Rogers Nelson has died at his Paisley Park residence this morning at the age of 57," his publicist, Yvette Noel-Schure, wrote in a statement. She did not elaborate on the cause of his death. Prince had been briefly hospitalized Friday after his plane made an emergency landing at Illinois' Quad City International Airport. Noel-Schure told USA TODAY that he had been struggling with the flu. Prince, a 2004 Rock Hall of

**His purple reign**  
'It would be difficult to imagine what pop, R&B would sound like had Prince never performed.'  
**APPRECIATION, IN LIFE**  
**In his own words**  
Highlights of our interviews with the wry, intriguing artist.  
**IN LIFE**

Fame inductee, won seven Grammy Awards. He also won a best-original-song Oscar for his 1984 film *Purple Rain*. His long list of hit songs includes 1999, *Little Red Corvette*, *When Doves Cry*, *Let's Go Crazy* and *Kiss*. The 5-foot-2 Minneapolis native broke through in the late 1970s. He was also a devout Jehovah's Witness, having converted from the Seventh Day Adventist Church in 2001. He frequently "freaked out" fans when he knocked on doors as part of its proselytization practice.

NEWSLINE

IN NEWS

**U.S.-led coalition burns \$500M of Islamic State cash**

IN LIFE

**Review: 'Winter's War' leaves us cold**

HOME DELIVERY  
1-800-872-0001  
USATODAYSERVICE.COM



USA SNAPSHOTS

Endless plastic

Plastic packaging collected for recycling worldwide:  
**14%**

Source: World Economic Forum/  
Ellen MacArthur Foundation  
TERRY BYRNE AND JANET LOEHKE, USA TODAY



Bruno Lucke, 9, is a member of the Fraternidade Descendência Americana in Santa Barbara d'Oeste, Brazil. To him — and others there — the Confederate flag is a symbol of love and family.

**'Wish I was in Dixie' — in Brazil; town embraces Confederate flag**

Martin Rogers  
@mrogersUSAT  
USA TODAY Sports

SANTA BARBARA D'OESTE, BRAZIL Bruno Lucke is a 9-year-old with a sweet smile, a love of soccer and his own YouTube channel. He also wears a cap with the Confederate battle flag emblazoned on its peak. This city of more than 180,000, an hour's flight from Rio de Janeiro, site of this summer's Olymp-

pic Games, is perhaps the last place you'd expect to find the most controversial symbol in American history. It adorns everything from belt buckles to bumper stickers among the Fraternidade Descendência Americana, an organization that celebrates the emigration of a group of defeated Southerners to Brazil after the Civil War 150 years ago. Yet in Santa Barbara d'Oeste there is no negative association with the flag that many Americans see as a symbol of slavery

and segregation. "To me," Bruno says, already dreaming of the hot dogs he'll soon consume at a popular annual Confederate festival, "the flag is a symbol of love." The festival will be held Sunday in a peaceful patch of leafy greenery next to a small chapel and near a graveyard where settlers and their descendants — *Confederados*, as they are known here — have been buried for gen

LEAD IN YOUR WATER

**States, utilities resist lead disclosures**

EPA wants info about risky pipes posted

Alison Young  
@alisonmnyoung  
USA TODAY

Some states and water utilities balk at the Environmental Protection Agency's call to post inventory information online about the number and locations of risky lead pipes in their systems, according to a review of documents obtained from 49 states by the USA TODAY NETWORK. Drinking water regulators in about a dozen states expressed varying degrees of resistance or concerns about the EPA's directive encouraging water systems to voluntarily give consumers easy access to what utilities know about homes receiving drinking water through lead service lines, a key indicator of whether a home's tap water could be contaminated and whether utilities are complying with testing regulations. "We do not have the initial ma-

STATE-BY-STATE 5A AMERICA'S MARKETS 8B MARKETPLACE TODAY 6D PUZZLES 7D TONIGHT ON TV 9D WEATHER 8A YOUR SAY 8A

**Read the pdf or click here to read online**



# Some states, utilities balk at disclosing locations of lead water pipes

Alison Young, USA TODAY

Some states and water utilities are balking at the Environmental Protection Agency's call to post inventory information online about the number and locations of risky lead pipes in their systems, according to a review of documents obtained from 49 states by the USA TODAY NETWORK.

Drinking water regulators in about a dozen states expressed varying degrees of resistance or concerns about the EPA's directive encouraging water systems to voluntarily give consumers easy access to what utilities know about homes receiving drinking water through lead service lines, a key indicator of whether a home's tap water could be contaminated and whether utilities are complying with testing regulations.

"We do not have the initial materials inventory from systems readily available and do not intend to spend valuable staff resources sifting through microfilm to find this information," South Dakota's water regulatory agency told the EPA, saying in its March 7 letter that it would instead post details about the subset of homes where each utility takes its water samples.

USA TODAY NETWORK reporters collected letters from 49 state agencies responding to the EPA's call for action.



**A lead service line removed from in front of a home in Southfield last year.**

Requests are still pending for letters from New Jersey and the District of Columbia.

Some major water utilities told USA TODAY they also have concerns, including customers' privacy. The bottom line: It's unlikely water system inventory information



will be widely available online anytime soon.

“What the EPA is asking for is critically important,” said Yanna Lambrinidou, a drinking water safety watchdog and affiliate faculty member at Virginia Tech. She called resistance expressed by some states “highly troubling” and an impediment to the public knowing whether utilities are testing water from the right customers’ taps, meaning those with the lead service lines that are most likely to have lead-contaminated water. States’ lead enforcement letters to EPA

Even after Flint, Mich., switched to corrosive river water that drew lead out of pipes at an alarming rate, the city’s water system passed its EPA-mandated water tests in part because the city wasn’t testing at homes with risky lead service lines, as required. On Wednesday, criminal charges were announced against two Michigan state water regulators and Flint’s supervisor of its lab and water quality.

Most contaminants can be filtered out at a water treatment plant. But lead usually gets into drinking water at the end of the system, as it passes through lead pipes coming onto individual properties and into homes.

That’s what makes thorough tracking and transparency about the location of lead service lines important. If utilities test water at homes that have little or no lead in their plumbing, the results are unlikely to find contamination and can give a false sense of safety across the system, as they did in Flint, Lambrinidou said.

“Accountability, up until today, has almost been completely absent because the public has been left out of the equation of protecting ourselves from lead in water,” Lambrinidou said.

Beyond Flint: Excessive lead levels found in almost 2,000 water systems across all 50 states

A USA TODAY NETWORK investigation last month revealed that almost 2,000 water systems serving 6 million people nationwide have failed to meet the EPA’s standards for lead in drinking water. But people in thousands more communities deemed in compliance with EPA’s lead rules have no assurance their drinking water is safe because of the limited and inconsistent ways water is being



**Failures of the water system in Flint, Mich., have shaken confidence in water safety, and some officials face criminal charges.**

tested, the investigation found.

It’s an issue with significant consequences because there is no safe level of lead exposure. Even at low levels, lead can cause reduced IQs, attention disorders and other problem behaviors in children. In adults, lead exposure is associated with kidney problems, high blood pressure and increased risks of cardiovascular deaths.

Federal regulations required water systems in the early 1990s to determine what kinds of materials their pipes were made of in at least some portions of their distribution areas.

The EPA, as part of its effort to restore public confidence in the safety of U.S. drinking water, sent letters Feb. 29 to every state, calling on their drinking water regulator to “work with” utilities to post on the web those documents – as well as any updates or maps of lead service line locations.

Many states told the EPA that water systems were never required to file their

inventories with state regulatory agencies, which enforce federal drinking water regulations. The utilities merely had to certify that they had done the survey work in order to identify a limited pool of high-risk homes with lead service lines and lead plumbing to serve as tap water testing locations.

The very largest water systems only needed to identify 100 sampling locations, and federal regulations allow smaller systems to test at even

fewer sites.

Got lead in your water? It's not easy to find out.

Water regulators at the Virginia Department of Health told EPA that representa-

tives from its state's water utilities have "expressed a number of concerns ... primarily about the expenditure of a substantial amount of staff and financial resources to complete this request," according to the state's March 25 letter. North Carolina and North Dakota also expressed concerns that gathering and posting inventory records would require significant effort.

"The placement of voluminous information gathered from these materials evaluations, most of which were conducted more than 20 years ago, on either the water system's website or on our agency's website would be overwhelming," North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality said in its letter.

Some states, like Kansas, Missouri and Pennsylvania, have raised privacy concerns about publicly posting the locations of lead pipes or addresses where utilities test water for lead. Other states, like Florida, sent letters to the EPA that didn't specify whether they had encouraged water systems to post inventories online.

The EPA said it is reviewing states' response letters. "EPA believes these actions are essential to restoring public confidence in the safety of our drinking water," the agency said in a statement. The information the EPA wants posted will help "demonstrate that (water utilities) have conducted a thorough materials evaluation and

understand the locations of lead service lines in their system."

Rather than call for water utilities to post inventories and any updated maps online, some state regulators have told the EPA they are asking for different types of information to shed light on lead pipes in the systems.

South Dakota regulators already have created and posted online reports for each water system listing the locations of water sample sites and whether they are served with a lead service line or other lead materials. "We included the address so that people could look at the table and see if their home was near one of these sites," giving clues about their own home's pipes, said Mark Mayer, the state's drinking water program administrator. "We felt that that was as good or better than what the EPA was asking for." EPA delay in releasing danger level for lead in water raises questions

Indiana regulators are surveying their state's water systems, asking for each to provide a tally of their lead lines. But the survey forms don't give any location information. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management's April 6 letter doesn't say whether it plans to ask utilities to post inventory details, locations or any maps of lead line locations. The department didn't respond to USA TODAY's questions about this.

North Carolina, which balked at posting 20-year-old inventories online, said it instead will ask water systems to update certain forms, including those covering construction materials, plans for selecting water sample test sites and spreadsheets of test locations. But rather than post the information online, the forms will be "placed in our files, and will be available for public review, upon request," the state's letter said.

Jessica Godreau, chief of North Carolina's Public Water Supply Section, told USA TODAY her department lacks the resources to scan massive amounts of information and post it on the Internet. But she said the updated forms, which the state expects to receive by sometime this summer, would be easily available to anybody who asks.

While many states told the EPA they'll encourage water systems to post their original inventories and some said they are asking

**Even after Flint, Mich., switched to corrosive river water that drew lead out of pipes, the water system passed EPA-mandated tests in part because the city wasn't testing at homes with risky lead service lines.**

for updates, only a few states set deadlines or indicated efforts mandating sharing the inventories with the public, the USA TODAY NETWORK review found.

- **Mississippi:** Starting June 1, the state will require water systems annually submit an inventory or map of lead service lines and lead plumbing in their systems. The information will be posted on the state’s website.

- **Illinois:** The state told federal officials it will require water systems to update and refine their inventories of lead service lines. Although not specified the state’s letter, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency spokesperson Kim Biggs told USA TODAY the information will be required to be posted on the Web.

- **Ohio:** Governor John Kasich and state water regulators recently proposed state legislation to require all water systems to identify and map areas of their distribution systems that “are known or are likely to contain lead services lines.” Systems “will be required to submit a copy of the map to the Ohio EPA and we will work with water systems to ensure this information is posted on state and local websites,” Ohio’s letter said.

- **Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada and Utah:** These states said they are asking their water systems to update their inventories. Kansas, noting possible “homeowner privacy concerns,” said: “Posting of that updated information will also be left to the discretion of the water systems.”

Despite such concerns, some municipal water systems already are posting detailed maps online showing the locations of lead service lines. Massachusetts regulators, in their March 29 letter, noted that the Boston Water and Sewer Commission’s online inventory information could serve as a model for others. The City of Cincinnati has posted similar information online that allows customers to look up information about whether they have a lead line, the Ohio EPA said in its April 1 letter.

Boston’s water system has been posting maps of lead service lines since 2006. The system used a water meter replacement program during 2002-2004 as an opportunity

to also catalog what individual water service lines were made of, said James Steinkrauss, the commission’s deputy general counsel. While the system sent letters to customers in 2005 notifying them if they had a lead service line, Steinkrauss said the public maps allow renters and others to know if a property is known to be served by a lead pipe. Lead taints drinking water in hundreds of schools, day cares across USA

The maps list addresses but not any customer names or other account-specific information, he said. “We haven’t had a lot of negative feedback.” As a government agency, the commission’s documents are subject to public disclosure. “We have a certain level of comfort we can make public records available to the public,” he said.

How far the EPA’s suggested and voluntary encouragement will go remains unclear. Officials at some major water companies told USA TODAY that while they are in favor of transparency, they worry about balancing customer privacy with public disclosures.

“While we respect and understand the intended benefit of making materials inventories and locations of lead service lines public via our website, we are equally and concerned about the negative impacts this could have,” Aqua America, which provides water and wastewater services to about 3 million people in eight states, said in a statement to USA TODAY.

Those issues include “inappropriate use of this information by third parties” and making customers hesitant to participate in sampling programs because of privacy concerns. “We believe we can achieve the same results by directly and privately notifying customers who have lead service lines,” Aqua America said.

Officials at American Water, which provides water and wastewater services to about 15 million people in 47 states and Ontario, Canada, said many water systems don’t have detailed, accessible inventories of customer connection pipes. Much of that information is on about 3 million, decades-old, 3-by-5 paper index cards – one for each drinking water connection, said Mark LeChevallier, the company’s director of Innovation and Environmental Stewardship.

American Water has been in the process of digitizing and geocoding the information. LeChevallier expects the work to be done at all of its systems in about six months. But each card has varying amounts of information about whether a line is made of lead, he said, and some have no information about the line's materials.

While the digitizing project will make it

easier for American Water customers to get information about their own service lines, the company is concerned about customer privacy implications of publicly releasing maps or locations of lead lines.

"We would like to have a discussion with the state agencies and EPA around the issues of how do we actually present this information to the public," LeChevallier said.





**Web only presentation**

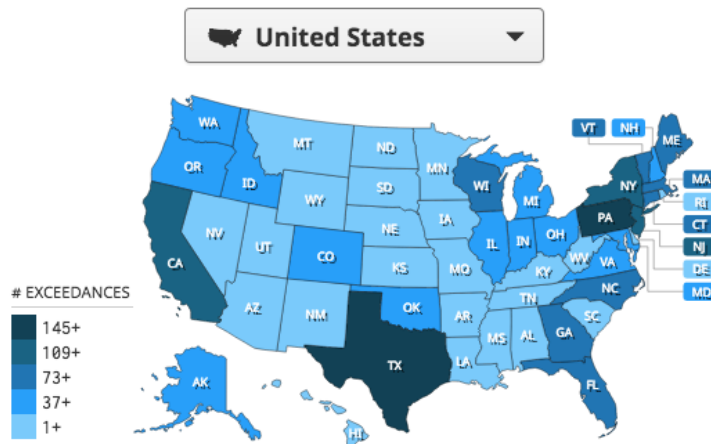
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/03/16/see-whether-your-water-system-failed-epa-lead-testing/81876928/>

# See whether your water system failed EPA lead testing

## LEAD IN THE WATER: A NATIONWIDE LOOK



Since 2012, nearly 2,000 water systems across the U.S. have found elevated lead levels in tap water samples, a public health concern that requires them to notify customers and take action. Search or click the map to find systems in your area. The map table shows the state / name of the water system; the county it serves; the range of lead levels over 15 parts per billion in samples that triggered an action status, and total action-level tests over the period.



United States

STATE	SAMPLE MEASURE	# EXCEEDANCES
Texas	15.5ppb – 600ppb	183
Pennsylvania	15.5ppb – 1,273ppb	157
New York	15.5ppb – 2,300ppb	128
California	15.8ppb – 13,200ppb	112

March 16, 2016



**Online video**

<http://www.usatoday.com/videos/news/nation/2016/03/16/81854348/>

# Lead in your water | A USA TODAY Network Investigation



**Across the country almost two thousand drinking water systems have failed lead testing since 2012. A USA TODAY Network investigation found harmful levels of lead in homes, schools, and other public buildings.**

Month, 16, 2016

---

# OPINION

TODAY'S DEBATE LEAD CONTAMINATION

## Our view

### In dozens of little Flints, the water might be toxic

During the presidential campaign, one of Donald Trump's most effective lines was, "It used to be, cars were made in Flint and you couldn't drink the water in Mexico. Now, the cars are made in Mexico and you can't drink the water in Flint."

Turns out, it's not just Flint where drinking the water may be hazardous to your health.

A USA TODAY Network investigation, published this month, found that nearly 4 million Americans are drinking water that regulators have allowed to be either so negligently tested for lead that officials have no idea what is in the water or, when tests were done, high lead levels were ignored, often for years.

Dozens of lead-contaminated little Flints could be scattered across the country in communities of a few hundred to a few thousand people served by tiny water utilities with few resources and scant government oversight.

Just as in Flint, the Michigan city where lead contamination captured global attention, state environmental regulators and federal Environmental Protection Agency officials have had the data they need to pinpoint problems and warn parents who may be inadvertently poisoning their children at the kitchen sink.

But regulators instead chose to leave the public in the dark and allow children to drink question-



MANDEL NGAN, AP/GETTY IMAGES  
President-elect Trump at the Flint water plant on Sept. 14.

able tap water while they pursued a low-profile approach that could stretch on for years. In some cases, regulators just gave up when they couldn't find someone responsible for the tap water.

When USA TODAY Network reporters looked through state and federal data, it wasn't hard to find communities where test results found many times the EPA's limit on lead in water or where testing simply wasn't done. The Americans left behind by environmental regulators, who sometimes treat lead contamination as a minor issue left over from another time, are quite often in Trump country. Places like Ranger, Texas, East Mooringsport, La. and Coal Mountain, W.Va.

The EPA wouldn't comment to reporters who spent a year looking into the hidden lead contamination problem, but the agency did release a new Drinking Water Action Plan last month. The plan is mainly window dressing, heavy on proposals for intergovernmental cooperation, ideas for new Web portals, education on best practices and new metrics. What it lacks is urgency and action.

Back when Trump was running for president, he expressed his enthusiasm for returning the EPA to its fundamental job of "crystal clear, clean water" and clean air. Sure, Trump has also said he wants to shut down the EPA, or at least slash its budget. And his choice of Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to lead the environmental agency is worrisome, considering that Pruitt has made a career of suing the EPA.

But Trump's professed concern for clean water and clean air may point to an opportunity for progress where eight years of a Democratic administration has left millions of Americans in poor and rural areas with water systems that could be tainted with toxic levels of lead.

The new president would be smart to look for opportunities to show his "forgotten" voters that he won't forget them, even when it might mean more aggressive environmental oversight.

## Opposing view

### We have a plan to reduce lead now

This statement was provided by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Protecting all Americans from exposure to lead is a top priority for EPA. While EPA's Lead and Copper Rule has resulted in substantial reductions of lead and copper in drinking water, we are taking steps to strengthen and modernize the rule, which is now 25 years old.

In October we released a White Paper on the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions that provides examples of regulatory provisions EPA is evaluating in order to improve public health protection. Topics include: lead service line replacement, improving optimum corrosion control treatment requirements, the potential role of point-of-use filters, consideration of a health-based benchmark for household-level interventions, clarifications or strengthening of tap sampling requirements, increased transparency and enhanced public education. We expect to propose revisions in 2017.

Revising the Lead and Copper Rule is part of our broader work to improve the safety and reliability of drinking water in America. In November we released a Drinking Water Action Plan which maps out a set of

concrete, practical actions that together have the potential to dramatically strengthen drinking water safety.

This includes establishing a 21st century electronic reporting system that gives regulators and the public prompt and accurate information on drinking water quality, advancing equity in drinking water protection, and further reducing lead risks through enhanced oversight.

In tandem with these two efforts, EPA has greatly intensified our work with state drinking water programs to focus on implementation of the current Lead and Copper Rule, including meeting with every state to make sure they're addressing any high lead levels and fully implementing the current rule.

We've also provided recommendations regarding optimal corrosion control treatment, source water changes, sampling monitoring, and we've increased the number of program reviews and trainings nationwide.

EPA understands there is no single answer or simple solution for reducing lead in drinking water, but the agency is committed to taking steps now to enable future actions to further strengthen the safety of America's drinking water.

# Rethinking immigration one case at a time

Thomas G. Snow

I am an immigration judge. People I meet seem pretty interested in that, especially lately. But they often don't seem to understand what we do. I've found that the best way to explain the job is to describe some of the decisions we make.

People come before an immigration judge because the U.S. government, via the Department of Homeland Security, is trying to deport them. And there is usually little dispute that they are deportable. They've come across the border illegally, or they've overstayed their visas, or they have legal status in the U.S. but have committed crimes that make them deportable. So we don't have to spend much time deciding whether someone is here legally or not.

What we do spend time on is whether the person before us has a legal basis to remain in our country. For example, someone facing physical abuse (or worse) back home, depending on the reasons for such persecution, may be eligible for asylum and can stay. A person with U.S. citizen children — who has been here at least 10 years and has good moral character, and whose kids would suffer "exceptional and extremely unusual hardship" if the parent is deported — can stay. Even someone who has committed a violent or other serious crime in the U.S., if he can show he would be tortured by public officials in his home country, can stay.

#### VEKING QUESTIONS

Deciding such cases doesn't sound so difficult. But it often is. Take the example of someone seeking asylum. One of our most vexing challenges is assessing credibility — trying to figure out whether the person is telling the truth about what he fears and why. Sometimes, there is not much to go on other than the person's own testimony. Yet this is not a decision we want to get wrong. I've probably been fooled and granted asylum to someone who didn't deserve it. I hope and pray I have not denied asylum to someone who did.

Cases involving a father or mother with a couple of U.S. citizen kids are among our most gut-wrenching. That "exceptional and extremely unusual hardship" standard can be difficult to meet. The law requires more than the sort of emotional and financial hardship that normally exists in



SANDY HURFAKER, AP/GETTY IMAGES  
At the U.S.-Mexico border during the Opening the Door Of Hope in San Ysidro, Calif., on Nov. 19.

deportation cases. So we sometimes have to order fine people, deported to places they barely remember — in decisions often delivered orally, in court, in front of sobbing kids and desperate spouses.

And there are those few whose only available claim, because of their serious convictions, is that they will be tortured. They are the least sympathetic of those who appear before us. Drug traffickers. Sex offenders. Thieves. They seek protection pursuant to our obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Torture. When on very rare occasions the evidence compels it, I grant them relief. To our nation's great moral credit, we don't send people to places where they will be tortured — no matter how repugnant their crimes.

#### SOLITARY DECISION

Some of those the government is trying to deport are detained. Decisions by immigration judges on whether to grant them bond have significant consequences of their own. A detained person might have only weeks, not months or years, to prepare his case. And he could be held several hours away from his lawyer, assuming he is fortunate enough to have one. At the same time, no immigration judge wants to conclude someone is neither a danger nor a flight risk, grant release, and then be proved wrong.

Immigration judges make

these decisions alone. Many are made following distraught or shame-filled testimony covering almost unimaginable acts of inhumanity. And we make them several times a day, day after day, year after year.

#### NO OUTSIDE INFLUENCE

We take every decision we make very seriously. We do our best to be fair to every person who comes before us. We judge each case on its own merits, no matter how many times we've seen similar fact patterns before.

We're not policymakers. We're not legislators. We are judges. Although we are employees of the Department of Justice, who act under the delegated authority of the attorney general, no one tells us how to decide a case. I've been an immigration judge for more than 11 years, and nobody has ever tried to influence a single one of my thousands of decisions. And finally, because we are judges, we do our best to follow the law and apply it impartially to the people who appear before us. I know I do so, even when it breaks my heart.

Thomas G. Snow is an immigration judge. He was acting director of the Executive Office for Immigration Review, responsible for the entire U.S. Immigration Court system, from 2009 to 2011. The views expressed in this piece do not necessarily reflect those of EOIR or the Department of Justice.

F.H. Buckley

When President-elect Donald Trump promised a wall, he mentioned a big door for qualified legal immigrants. If that's what you want, just look north.

The U.S. is 14% foreign-born, and that's a big issue. Canadians are more than 20% foreign-born and it's a non-issue. They're doing something right.

What would Canadian-style immigration policies look like if we imported them? We'd need a sea change in how we think about immigration, one in which the interests of native-born Americans come first.

The next thing we'd need is a repeal of our 1965 Immigration Act. Right now immigration slots are about two-thirds family-based and one-fifth economic migrants. We should welcome economic immigrants with open arms and create a system that recognizes that there are a lot of great immigrants out there. We need to just get them in.

Yes, we need to screen for people who would do us harm, but that apart we need Canadians' entrepreneurial business model. Here's what they do: Canada uses the Internet to make its system transparent and easy to access. Economic immigrants can quickly determine their eligibility by getting on a website and seeing how they score on a points system that asks questions about age, language ability, education and skills. The answers are verified by private headhunters retained by Canada.

Even then, applicants are not given an immigrant visa without a job, though they may be able to visit for interviews. One of the big

immigration issues here is whether an immigrant will be taking away a job from a native-born American. Right now we check by asking the Labor Department to certify that there are no Americans qualified for the job. The "labor cert" process can take as long as two years.

Canadians get around this by posting labor market analysis on the Web in advance. When an immigrant sees whether he qualifies under the points system, he can also see whether he has a realistic possibility of a job, given the country's reported needs. The labor market impact assessment is tailored to a set of different industries in different parts of the country. In other words, the immigrant might be permitted to accept a job as an architect in Vancouver but not in Toronto.

Some will quickly get a job lined up. For others, it's a waiting game. If no employer picks them up within a year, they'll be dropped from the queue.

One feature of the Canadian system that will appeal to Americans is its "nominee program," in which provinces are given control over immigration within their borders. Applied in this country, Texas might be allocated 20,000 immigrant slots for people it thinks it needs, after they pass federal security standards. If you want to know what the labor needs of Texas, ask Texans.

Our broken legal immigration system is a far greater problem than our illegal entrants. Trump has appointed a border security hawk in retired general John Kelly to head up Homeland Security. While he builds that wall, let's fix the door for legal immigrants too.

Frank H. Buckley's most recent book is *The Way Back: Restoring the Promise of America*.



"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation."

Allen H. Neuharth, Founder, Sept. 15, 1982

GANNETT COMPANY PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**Robert Dickey**

GANNETT CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER  
**Joanne Lipman**

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
**Patty Michalski**

EDITOR, EDITORIAL PAGE  
**Bill Sternberg**

EXECUTIVE EDITOR  
**Beryl Love**

USA TODAY PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER  
**John Zidich**

GENERAL MANAGER  
**Susan Motiff**

CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER  
**Kevin Gentzel**

CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER  
**Daniel Bernard**

PRESIDENT, SPORTS MEDIA GROUP  
**David Morgan**

Read the pdf or click here to read online

Published December 29, 2016

PAGES 13A



TODAY'S DEBATE LEAD CONTAMINATION

## Our view

# Dozens of little Flints

The Editorial Board, USA TODAY

During the presidential campaign, one of Donald Trump's most effective lines was, "It used to be, cars were made in Flint and you couldn't drink the water in Mexico. Now, the cars are made in Mexico and you can't drink the water in Flint."

Turns out, it's not just Flint where drinking the water may be hazardous to your health.

A USA TODAY Network investigation, published this month, found that nearly 4 million Americans are drinking water that regulators have allowed to be either so negligently tested for lead that officials have no idea what is in the water or, when tests were done, high lead levels were ignored, often for years.

Dozens of lead-contaminated little Flints could be scattered across the country in communities of a few hundred to a few thousand people served by tiny water utilities with few resources and scant government oversight.

During the presidential campaign, one of Donald Trump's most effective lines was, "It used to be, cars were made in Flint and you couldn't drink the water in Mexico. Now, the cars are made in Mexico and you can't drink the water in Flint."

Turns out, it's not just Flint where drinking the water may be hazardous to your health.



MANDEL NGAN, AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**President-elect Trump at the Flint water plant on Sept. 14.**

A USA TODAY Network investigation, published this month, found that nearly 4 million Americans are drinking water that regulators have allowed to be either so negligently tested for lead that officials have no idea what is in the water or, when tests were done, high lead levels were ignored, often for years.

Dozens of lead-contaminated little Flints could be scattered across the country in communities of a few hundred to a few thousand people served by tiny water utilities with few resources and scant government oversight.

But Trump's professed concern for clean water and clean air may point to an opportunity for progress where eight years of a Democratic administration has left millions of Americans behind, many of them in poor and rural areas with water systems that could be tainted with toxic levels of lead.

The new president would be smart to look for opportunities to show his "forgotten" voters that he won't forget them, even when it might mean more aggressive environmental oversight.

---

USA TODAY's editorial opinions are decided by its Editorial Board, separate from the news staff. Most editorials are coupled with an opposing view — a unique USA TODAY feature.



# OPINION

TODAY'S DEBATE BEYOND FLINT, MICH.

## Our view In getting lead out of drinking water, where was the EPA?

When local and state governments fail the public on a serious health issue, a tough federal watchdog can sure come in handy. Too bad the Environmental Protection Agency was so mired in legal protocol last year that it failed to rescue the residents in Flint, Mich., where high levels of lead in drinking water became a national scandal.

Now, while Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy continue to play a game of pass the blame, it's clear that every level of government failed Flint. The state's failures — bungling water treatment, then ignoring mounting evidence of tainted water — must be dealt with in Michigan. But the EPA's failures — to ensure compliance with federal law and warn residents of lead in water when the state did not — are a national problem, considering that Flint is the tip of a poison iceberg.

A USA TODAY NETWORK investigation last month found excessive lead in nearly 2,000 water systems that serve 6 million people across the country. About 350 provide drinking water to schools and day care centers, where some of the highest lead levels were found. A water sample at a Pennsylvania preschool was 14 times the EPA's "action level" limit of 15 parts per billion.

When drinking water is lead-tainted, it is children who are at



JACQUELYN MARTIN, AP

### In Flint, Mich.

greatest risk. Elevated lead levels in blood can cause everything from decreased IQ and behavioral problems to slower growth and an array of irreversible ailments.

As in Flint, lead problems are often exacerbated by official silence: In about 9% of the 2,000 cases, water systems failed to notify residents, as required by federal rules. In Sebring, Ohio, officials found problems last summer, but local leaders didn't alert the public until January, after Flint's scandal. The fact that federal law gives states primary responsibility to enforce lead standards is no excuse for the EPA to remain silent when a state fails to act.

The EPA has known for years

about this failure to communicate. When the water in Washington, D.C., was tainted with lead in the 2000s, the local utility initially assured customers it was safe. When the authority was forced to come clean, it sent out vague language in an EPA-approved brochure, spurring a city council member to demand, "Where were you, EPA?"

Also missing from what should be a national strategy to deal with lead is a defined health-hazard standard — the amount of lead in water that makes it unsafe to drink or use for cooking. Without an EPA-defined standard, families do not know when they should switch to bottled water or use filters to make tap water safe.

EPA says it plans to release rules next year. It's about time. Ultimately, the only way to assure lead-free water is to replace the nation's lead pipes at a cost of billions spread over decades.

Meanwhile, along with corrosion controls, a number of things would help, including a national, consumer-friendly database where people could check whether their home is served by a lead service line so they could decide whether to filter their water.

Meanwhile, nothing utilities or governments do will make much difference unless local and state officials know that when they fail to perform, a federal watchdog will bark rather than roll over.

## Opposing view EPA is making needed changes

Joel Beauvais

Protection of public health is the absolute top priority for EPA. The drinking water crisis in Flint should not have happened, but while the spotlight is still on the issue of lead in drinking water, we have an opportunity to harness the resources and attention to make needed changes.

EPA recently sent letters to every governor and state environmental and health commissioner primarily responsible for enforcing drinking water rules, urging them to work with us — on infrastructure investments, technology, oversight and risk assessment, public engagement and education — to keep our drinking water safe.

We also initiated a nationwide reassessment of safe drinking water programs, including meeting with officials from every state drinking water program to make sure they're addressing any high lead levels and fully enforcing the federal Lead and Copper Rule.

EPA recognizes the need to strengthen the rule, and we're working to improve its public health protections. We are considering recommendations from a diverse group of external advisers and stakeholders. Transparency among govern-

ment, water utilities and the public is vital; EPA's oversight role is as important as ever. We are also working to identify the best scientific approach to determine a level of lead in drinking water that public health officials could use to intervene to make sure that residents who could be at risk are made aware as soon as possible.

While we strengthen regulations, serious investments are needed over the next 20 years to maintain, upgrade and replace thousands of miles of service pipes and thousands of treatment plants, storage tanks and water distribution systems — all vital to public health and the economy. Our recent survey shows that \$384 billion in improvements are needed for the nation's drinking water infrastructure through 2030 so it can continue providing safe drinking water to 300 million Americans. The longer we wait, the more costly this will be.

As EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy has said, it's tragic that it took a disaster of this scale for this issue to get the attention it deserves. EPA is committed to doing everything it can to protect our drinking water.

Joel Beauvais is deputy assistant administrator for water at the EPA.

Brad Anderson

The Treasury Department has announced new regulations aimed at stopping tax inversions, in which U.S. companies merge with foreign counterparts and headquarter abroad, saving big on their tax bills. And Tuesday, the president reiterated his call for Congress to pass legislation preventing them. This marks the third set of new inversion regulations put forth by Treasury in the past 19 months.

It's understandable why the Obama administration has been so aggressive. More than a dozen inversions and similar tax maneuvers have been announced over the past year and a half.

This year, Milwaukee-based auto parts supplier Johnson Controls merged with Ireland-based Tyco. The combined company will headquarter in Ireland and take advantage of its tax system, saving it, at least, \$150 million annually that can be used on research, expansion and employee compensation. Also this year, rare-drug manufacturer Baxalta, based outside Chicago, was taken over by Shire of Dublin.

Last year, Medtronic, one of the largest medical technology developers, merged with Covidien. These companies also chose to headquarter in low-tax Ireland.

### BURDENSOME TAX

U.S. companies pursue foreign mergers (which might lead to inversions) not only to better service customers and shareholders but also to make them more robust to ward off takeover attempts. American companies can be takeover targets for foreign counterparts because of the United States' burdensome corporate taxation that artificially devalues their market capitalization.

Shareholders looking for the best returns, which could accrue from a takeover, trump the wishes of management who want to stay independent. In a defensive move, companies such as Johnson Controls, Pfizer and Medtronic can pre-empt takeovers by pursuing mergers.

To protect American companies from foreign takeovers and stop them from moving overseas in tax inversions, U.S. corporate taxes must be brought in line with international norms. Sensible reform would reduce the U.S. corporate tax rate of 35% — the highest in the developed world — and end double taxation by moving to the "territorial" system used by other countries, where companies pay taxes only on their domestic earnings.

## INVERSIONS CREATE JOBS FOR THE USA

Instead of demonizing companies, let them invest their foreign profits here



RICHARD CREW, AP

Michael Kors Ltd., which moved to Hong Kong in 2003 when it had zero stores in the U.S., now has hundreds of U.S. boutiques.

At the moment, American companies that do business overseas are taxed twice, once in the country where the profits are earned and then again at home. (Companies receive a rebate for the amount of tax paid abroad.)

Requiring American companies to pay taxes on their worldwide earnings before they can invest at home puts them at an unfair disadvantage with their foreign competitors, which can invest their worldwide earnings in the U.S. tax-free. Not exactly a system that looks after its own.

### WHO'S UNPatriotic?

Ironically, then, inversions put companies in a better position to invest in the USA. While the academic and business literature on the connection between inversions and U.S. job creation is thin, the anecdotal evidence is strong.

Perhaps the best evidence comes from the big consulting firms Accenture and PricewaterhouseCoopers, which inverted to Bermuda in 2001 and 2002, respectively. U.S. jobs at these companies have skyrocketed in the intervening years — from 32,900 at Accenture and 29,100 at PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2009 to 48,000 and 41,500 today.

Tim Hortons (the Canadian version of Dunkin' Donuts),

which was based in the USA as part of Wendy's before repatriating to Canada in 2009, doubled its number of U.S. stores from 563 that year to 1,107 in 2011, creating thousands of jobs.

And fashion icon Michael Kors Ltd., which expatriated to Hong Kong in 2003 when it had zero stores in the U.S., now has hundreds of U.S. locations employing thousands of Americans. Such anecdotal evidence suggests that inversions put companies in a better competitive position to invest and grow in the USA.

U.S. companies are holding about \$2.1 trillion overseas to avoid the double taxation that would occur if they were to reinvest it at home. This incentivizes companies to use this offshore income to invest in jobs, facilities and research in foreign markets.

Rather than demonizing inverting American companies as — in Treasury Secretary Jack Lew's words — lacking in "patriotism," it's time to pursue fair tax reform. Such reform would level the playing field for American companies, protect them from foreign takeovers and keep them in America. That would be truly patriotic.

Brad Anderson is the former CEO of Best Buy and a member of the Job Creators Network.

## Panama Papers mirror Watergate lessons

Alicia Shepard

Imagine the movie. A reporter gets a query from a mysterious source promising information so damning it could lead to a head of state resigning. The source insists on anonymity.

Sounds like what just happened in Iceland this week. The prime minister resigned amid reports on the Panama Papers, triggered when a German reporter was offered 11.5 million documents pilfered from a Panamanian law firm that specializes in secret offshore services.

The events mirror what happened in the iconic journalism film *All the President's Men*, which debuted 40 years ago Saturday. It spins the tale of two young *Washington Post* reporters — Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein — who with relentless sleuthing and the help of a famous anonymous source, Deep Throat, uncovered evidence that forced President Nixon to resign.

While the reporters wrote a 1974 book of the same name, Woodward, Bernstein and the *Post* truly catapulted to fame with the 1976 movie starring Robert Redford as Woodward and Dustin Hoffman as Bernstein. The blockbuster turned the pair into national celebrities, earning them attention previously unheard of for most journalists.

The movie educated my generation on the need for documents and the importance of following the money — much like how *Spotlight*, the 2016 Oscar-winning movie about *The Boston Globe's* investigation into the Catholic Church's disastrous sex abuse scandal and coverup, is educating this generation.

The good news is that investigative reporting, thought to be moribund in the new digital order, is enjoying a resurgence. Investigative teams at *Buzzfeed* and *Fusion* are the most recent digital ventures. Noteworthy non-profit digital muckrakers include *ProPublica*, the Center for Investigative Reporting, the Center for Public Integrity, the Marshall Project and *The Texas Tribune*.

Just this week, the importance of shining a spotlight on corruption was highlighted, with the massive data drop and reporting project shepherded by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, another non-profit. The ICJ managed to closely collaborate with 400 reporters working for 100 media partners around the world to handle the largest data leak in modern history — and keep it secret for a year. They revealed how high-profile heads of state, celebrities, athletes and public officials managed to launder billions of dollars, evade taxes and avoid sanctions through the Mossack Fonseca law firm in Panama.

This project is as exciting and pioneering as the *Post's* Watergate coup. How the ICJ pulled off one of the most stunning investigative reporting collaborations in history not only portends well for the future of journalism, it also would be a movie as worthy as *All the President's Men*.

Mr. Redford, are you listening?

Alicia Shepard, a former NPR ombudsman who recently spent two years in Kabul working with Afghan journalists and the U.S. Agency for International Development, is the author of *Woodward and Bernstein: Life in the Shadow of Watergate*.

**USA TODAY**

"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation."  
Allen H. Neuharth, Founder, Sept. 15, 1982

---

GANNETT COMPANY PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**Robert Dickey**

---

<p style="text-align: center;">GANNETT CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER <b>Joanne Lipman</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">EDITOR IN CHIEF <b>David Callaway</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">EDITOR, EDITORIAL PAGE <b>Bill Sternberg</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXCLUSIVE EDITOR <b>Beryl Love</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">MANAGING EDITOR <b>Patty Michalski</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">USA TODAY PRESIDENT &amp; PUBLISHER <b>John Zidich</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL MANAGER <b>Susan Motiff</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER <b>Kevin Gentzel</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER <b>Daniel Bernard</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">PRESIDENT, SPORTS MEDIA GROUP <b>David Morgan</b></p>
--	--

Read the pdf or click here to read online

Published April 8, 2016

PAGES 7A



TODAY'S DEBATE BEYOND FLINT, MICH.

## Our view

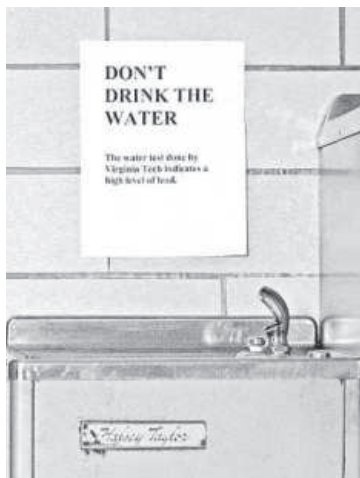
# Getting lead out of drinking water

The Editorial Board, USA TODAY

When local and state governments fail their residents on a serious health issue, a tough federal watchdog can sure come in handy. Too bad the Environmental Protection Agency was so mired in legal protocol last year that it failed to come to the rescue of residents in Flint, Mich., where staggering levels of lead in drinking water became a national scandal.

Now, while Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy continue to play a high-level game of pass the blame, it's clear that every level of government failed Flint. The state's failures — bungling water treatment, then ignoring mounting evidence of tainted water — must be dealt with in Michigan. But the EPA's failures — to ensure compliance with federal law and warn residents of tainted water when the state did not — are a problem for the nation, considering that Flint is just the tip of a lead-contaminated iceberg.

A USA TODAY NETWORK investigation last month found excessive lead levels in nearly 2,000 water systems that serve 6 million people across the country. About 350



JACQUELYN MARTIN, AP

**In Flint, Mich.**

provide drinking water to schools and day care centers, where some of the highest lead levels were found. A water sample at a Pennsylvania preschool was 14 times the EPA's "action level" limit of 15 parts per billion. At an elementary school in Ithaca, N.Y., one sample tested at 5,000 ppb of lead, the EPA's threshold for hazardous waste.

When drinking water is tainted with lead, it is children who are at greatest risk from elevated lead levels in their blood. Certain amounts can cause everything from decreased IQ and behavioral problems to slower growth and a wide array of physical ailments. The damage might not show up for years, and there's no way to reverse some of the effects.

As in Flint, lead problems are often exacerbated by a problem of silence: In about 9% of the 2,000 cases, water systems failed to notify residents, as required by federal rules. In Sebring, Ohio, for example, excessive lead levels were found last summer, but local officials didn't alert the public until January, after Flint made national news. While federal law gives states primary responsibility

to enforce lead standards, the EPA shouldn't remain silent when a state fails to act — the excuse the agency used for failing to speak out about Flint. People can do a lot to protect themselves — using filters or drinking bottled water — but not if no one tells them there's a problem.

The EPA has known for years about this failure to communicate. When drinking water in Washington, D.C., was contaminated with lead in the early 2000s, the local water authority repeatedly assured customers it was safe. When the authority — which was under the EPA's direct supervision — was forced to come clean, it sent out vague language in a brochure approved by the EPA. As the disaster unfolded, a city council member demanded, "Where were you, EPA?"

Also missing from what should be a coordinated national strategy to deal with lead is a defined health-hazard standard — the amount of lead in water that makes it unsafe to drink or use for cooking. The 15 parts per billion level, if found in 10% of a system's tested water, should trigger public notifications and improved anti-corrosion treatment at water plants. But in the 25 years since the lead rule was created, the federal government has yet to publish a recommendation for precisely what level of lead is hazardous to the most vulnerable consumers, such as infants drinking formula made with tap water. Without a health-hazard level, families do not know when they should

switch to bottled water or use filters to make tap water safe.

Determining this level is no doubt difficult, in part because federal health officials say there is no safe level of lead in drinking water. The EPA has said that it hopes to announce a standard in 2017. It's about time.

Ultimately, the only way to assure lead-free water is to replace the nation's lead pipes, a project that would cost billions and take decades to complete. Michigan's governor set an "intermediate-term goal" for Flint of planning and prioritizing the removal of lead service lines, the pipe that carries water from the main under the street onto your property and into your home.

Meanwhile, along with corrosion controls, there are ways to ensure that children are protected from lead-tainted water: A national, consumer-friendly database where people could check whether their home is served by a lead service line would give them the information to decide whether to filter their water.

Nothing utilities or governments do will make much difference, however, until local and state officials know that when they fail to perform, a federal watchdog will bark rather than roll over.

---

USA TODAY's editorial opinions are decided by its Editorial Board, separate from the news staff. Most editorials are coupled with an opposing view — a unique USA TODAY feature.