

Ensuring Safe Drinking Water for Las Cruces

If you have heard about the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, you may have questions about the safety of drinking water in Las Cruces. Here is information about the lead and copper status of Las Cruces Utilities (LCU) Water System.

Background:

In 1991, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) adopted the **Lead and Copper Rule (LCR)** establishing maximum limits, sampling methods, and monitoring programs to safeguard public health from the effects of residual amounts of lead and copper in community water supply systems. Contamination in some communities was primarily due to lead and copper materials used historically in water system pipelines constructed prior to 1991, and a lack of corrosion prevention measures in place.

Since passage of the LCR, lead and copper pipes are no longer utilized in water system piping in the US and throughout the 1990's widespread replacement of existing lead and copper based piping was initiated in water systems throughout the nation.

Las Cruces, New Mexico:

The Las Cruces utility infrastructure is a much younger and modern system with a stable, reliable ground water resource. Much of the growth and development of Las Cruces occurred after the 1991 LCR implementation. However, during the 1990's Las Cruces also engaged in active replacement of lead and copper piping in the known older districts within the utility service area.

In the 1990's the City of Las Cruces also provided public awareness to residents about the use and presence of copper pipes in some older structures and residences. Similar to awareness that lead-based paint may still exist in older structures, an informed population is critical in extending the knowledge and prevention of any further potential public health risks from these older structures.

Today, any time LCU finds lead or copper service lines to meters, we replace them immediately. If we see that the owner's portion of the service line (between the meter and their dwelling) is lead or copper, we advise the property owner that it would be prudent to have it replaced.

The Rule requires LCU to conduct Lead and Copper drinking water sampling every three years from 50 sites throughout the system, which must include structures built between 1983 through 1985. Testing from the taps of these buildings and not the system provides additional protection to the occupants, in the event of any detection of lead and copper above human health standards.



Las Cruces Compliance Status:

- There has been no history of exceedances of the LCR in Las Cruces since the adoption of the LCR in 1991.
- The most current analysis results are published every year by LCU in the Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) and mailed to more than 30,000 homes in Las Cruces. The results can also be viewed in the [NMED Drinking Water Watch](https://dww.water.net.env.nm.gov/DWW/) on the web at: <https://dww.water.net.env.nm.gov/DWW/>.
- The City replaces any remaining pipeline utilizing lead and copper, which may be discovered during street excavations, meter replacements, and other redevelopment activities.
- Information for homeowners living in older residences is available by contacting the Las Cruces New Mexico Environment Department at (575)-288-2050, or by reviewing numerous publications for homeowners provided by the EPA and the local Health Department.