Environmental Protection Network

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# SUMMARY

## EPN Comments on Proposed Revisions of the Lead and Copper Rule

February 13, 2020

On February 13, 2020, EPN submitted comments on EPA's proposed revisions to the lead and copper rule (LCR), developed to reduce health risks from exposure to lead in drinking water. Lead is a highly toxic pollutant that is especially harmful to children. Lead can cause learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and lower IQs in children, and create other serious health effects, including reproductive problems, in adults. There is no safe level of lead in blood.

EPN strongly supports some selected elements of the new rule, including improved inventories of public lead service lines, replacement plans and their public availability, and improved corrosion control treatment requirements and monitoring. However, EPN is deeply concerned that the proposed LCR fails to expedite public protection from the harmful effects of lead in drinking water.

EPN made the following recommendations to improve the proposed rule:

- EPA should consider an option to lower the action level at which water systems are required to take action to reduce lead exposure, and retain the annual replacement rate for lead service lines to increase public health protection.
- The proposal should be modified to make requirements much less complex, simplify determinations and enforcement actions taken when systems don't comply, and improve and strengthen reporting.
- Language in three areas of the rule related to water sampling should be clarified.

In order to address the proposed revisions to the LCR, EPN also recommends that EPA:

- Immediately issue a supplemental notice that provides the cost and benefits of lowering the action level and retaining the lead service line annual replacement rate.
- Add a section in the final rule identifying when a violation occurs after a water supply system exceeds the action level and does not take action as required.
- Require drinking water systems to report on compliance electronically to a database shared by EPA and the states.
- Commit to a thorough six-year review of the final LCR that collects and analyzes data on implementation, compliance, quality and completeness of lead violations reported by water systems and states, and full implementation of direct reporting to a shared data system.

**Background**

Lead can get into drinking water when lead service lines that carry drinking water from the street to buildings and lead-containing faucets and fixtures come in contact with water that causes corrosion. Lead-containing plumbing is more often found in older cities and homes built before 1986. The LCR, first issued under the Safe Drinking Water Act, requires water supply systems to monitor drinking water at customer taps. It set action levels of 15 parts per billion (ppb) for lead and 1.3 parts per million for copper, which, if exceeded in more than 10% of taps sampled, trigger additional actions to control corrosion. Under the rule, water suppliers are required to educate their consumers on how to reduce exposure to lead. Municipalities are responsible for replacing lead service lines, the main source of lead contamination in drinking water.