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## 795-2024

Communication

### Requested Agenda Type

Communications

### Request of Portland Advocates for Leadfree Drinking Water to address Council regarding Water Bureau’s failure to protect public health

### Date and Time Information

Requested Council Date  
September 18, 2024

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A brief description of Communication: Portland Water Bureau’s failure to protect public health

### Document History

Item 795 Communications in [September 18-19, 2024 Council Agenda](#) (<https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2024/9/18>)

City Council

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## Lead crises highlight inadequate protection against lead, prompting congressional action

Congress has repeatedly updated the SDWA to tighten requirements for lead. The [1996 SDWA Amendments](#) required new plumbing fittings and fixtures to comply with previously voluntary lead-leaching standards and prohibited sales of any of these items that failed to meet the law's definition of "lead free." In 2011, Congress passed [another law](#) that tightened the definition of "lead free," lowering the maximum lead content of the wetted surfaces of pipes, fittings, and fixtures from 8 percent down to a weighted average of 0.25 percent.

Despite these laws, it became clear that the public was not being protected from lead in drinking water after numerous crises occurred, including in [Washington, D.C.](#), in the early 2000s and later in [Flint, Michigan](#), and [Newark, New Jersey](#). Even when there are supposedly no lead service lines, water that is inadequately treated for corrosion can cause serious lead contamination, as it does in [Portland, Oregon](#), where it is an ongoing problem. As the EPA's former head of enforcement [has said](#), the LCR is difficult to enforce, and its implementation has long been "broken." Indeed, [NRDC's analysis](#) has found that tens of millions of Americans continue to be served by water systems that are significantly contaminated with lead, and according to the [EPA's latest estimate](#), 9.2 million homes are served by lead service lines.