

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Package of Bills Advancing New Jersey as National Leader in Lead Poisoning Prevention

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Legislation Will Require Regular Inspections for Lead Paint Hazards in Residential Rental Properties and Replacement of Lead Service Lines

BLOOMFIELD – Governor Phil Murphy today reaffirmed his commitment to address lead exposure in New Jersey and its harmful effects on public health and child development by signing a package of bills aimed protecting New Jersey’s families from lead poisoning. The legislation, which will require regular inspections for, and the remediation of, lead-based paint hazards in residential rental properties and require the inventory, replacement, and financing of lead service lines throughout the state within the next 10 years, will advance New Jersey as a national leader in lead poisoning prevention. In October 2019, Governor Murphy unveiled a comprehensive statewide plan (<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562019/approved/20191010a.shtml>) to address lead exposure in New Jersey, in which exposure to lead-based paint and lead in drinking water were two key elements of the strategy.

“In October of 2019, I put forth a multifaceted statewide plan to protect New Jersey’s children and families from the dangers of lead, and today, we are taking a significant step forward in our strategy to reduce lead exposure in our homes,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Modernizing our aging water infrastructure with new lead services lines is critical in ensuring safe drinking water flows through our communities. In addition to replacing service lines, we must also go further to protect those in older homes and apartments where door jambs and window sashes may be coated in decades of layers of lead-based paints, creating fine particulates that are unknowingly inhaled and ingested. Today, we are taking the most aggressive action in the nation to reduce lead-based paint exposure in our homes and communities, which is a critical victory for public health and environmental justice, and advances New Jersey as a national leader in lead poisoning prevention.”

“Lead prevention is a priority in New Jersey and Governor Murphy and I are committed to reducing the threat of lead poisoning in water systems and in the state’s older housing stock where lead-based paint is frequently found,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs**. “No child or adult should have to live with the detrimental and lasting health effects of lead poisoning. That is why DCA stands ready to develop an educational campaign about the hazards of lead and why controlling these hazards is so important. We are also dedicated to working with local governments to ensure improvements are made to water infrastructure and lead-safe inspections are conducted in all rental dwellings.”

The Governor signed the following three bills into law:

S1147/A1372 (Ruiz, Cruz-Perez/Holley, Wimberly, Benson, Mukherji) - Requires lead paint inspection on certain residential rental property, including upon tenant turnover; establishes lead-based paint hazard education program; appropriates \$3,900,000.

A5343/SS3398 (Schaer, McKnight, Spearman, Karabinchak/Singleton, Gopal, Greenstein) - Requires public community water systems to inventory and replace lead service lines within 10 years; provides for recoupment of costs by investorowned public water systems.

A5407/S3459 (Schaer, Karabinchak, Verrelli/Singleton, Lagana) - Removes restrictions on special assessments and

bond issuances for replacement of residential lead service lines; revises budgetary requirements for operators of certain water systems.

“With today’s signing New Jersey has become the fourth state in the nation to enact legislation targeted at ensuring our residential properties are free of lead-based paint, protecting our children against exposure,” **said Senator M. Teresa Ruiz**. “Within certain areas of the state as many as 7.6 percent of children have elevated blood lead levels. This takes the first step in beginning to address the issue by identifying the properties in need of remediation and providing funding for landlords to remove this hazard before welcoming new tenants. This legislation has been years in the making and I look forward to seeing this impact it has on families around the state.”

“About 80 percent of lead poisoning cases are caused by lead-based paint in homes built before 1978, affecting our low-income families the most,” **said Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez**. “Lead paint is a life-threatening hazard, especially to children, but by implementing statewide lead inspections, we can be certain that families in rental properties are safe from lead contamination. This is long overdue and removing the threat of lead from homes across the state is an important issue that must be addressed.”

“According to the American Water Works Association, there are around 350,000 homes and businesses in New Jersey served by lead service lines,” **said Senator Troy Singleton**. “This is especially concerning because drinking water contaminated with lead is extremely dangerous to a person’s health, especially for children and their development. These new laws are crucial towards detecting and replacing lead service lines across the state, ultimately working toward the goal of ensuring that every person in this state has access to safe drinking water.”

“In 2017, 4,697 children aged six and younger had elevated blood lead levels,” **said Senator Lagana**. “It is evident that lead contaminated water is a statewide problem and this law will help to stem this crisis before more residents are impacted. In addition, this law will be critical in assisting low-income households afford replacement of lead service lines, ensuring they get replaced promptly before more of our residents are affected.”

“We have long known that lead service lines affect the quality of our drinking water, and endanger our children, and it is time we started addressing the problem with real, long-term solutions,” **said Senator Vin Gopal**. “Low-income customers are often the most affected by these lead lines, and they should not have to incur the cost of replacing them when they fall on their property. We need to move quickly to appropriate funds, where needed, to replace aging lead service lines for the good of our state, and its public health.”

“It is estimated at least 20 percent of lead exposure towards humans comes from drinking water, with formula-fed infants possibly receiving 40 to 60 percent of lead exposure from the same source,” **said Senator Linda Greenstein**. “In recent years, a number of New Jersey water systems, particularly those in urban areas, have reported high lead action levels in their drinking water and we must do what we can to alleviate this issue. This legislation will be a huge aid in eliminating the risk of further exposures. No one should have to think twice if it is safe to grab a glass of water and this will bring us a step closer towards mending this problem.”

“To fight lead poisoning in our communities, we must take a more proactive approach to ensure older homes are inspected more regularly,” **said Assemblymen Jamel Holley, Benjie Wimberly, Daniel Benson, and Raj Mukherji**. Oftentimes, lead is discovered to be in the home after someone has become sick and shows symptoms. It’s too late. Requiring lead inspections in all pre-1978 rental units at tenant turnover or every 3 years will help homeowners catch any problems that arise sooner than later. We can do more to protect New Jersey’s families and children from the effects of lead poisoning.”

“Life-long health effects from lead exposure are not limited to the thousands of new cases New Jersey records annually but have defined daily life in New Jersey’s impoverished and minority communities for generations,” **said Assemblyman Gary Schaer**. “For these communities lead exposure is the silent epidemic that has never warranted a bold and unified response, until today. Our communities and our State share one common future, none of us are immune to the reverberating effects of lead poisoning. This legislation provides a path forward to guaranteeing every resident the right to safe drinking water.”

“Critical upgrades to New Jersey’s water infrastructure are needed to modernize a decaying water system and ensure safe drinking water for New Jersey residents,” **said Assemblywoman Angela McKnight**. “Major cities and the most historic cities, such as Newark, continue to battle a lead crisis on top of the current public health crisis we find ourselves in. Lead contamination and aging water infrastructure will amount to a public health crisis, an environmental emergency, and have an impact on our roadways for future generations if we don’t take action and develop a plan now.”

“Water systems cannot go overlooked and we must continue to make drinking water as safe as possible,” said **Assemblyman William Spearman**. “Updated infrastructure systems and a well thought out plan to replace any old service lines are very important and will help keep harmful lead out of our water.”

“Replacing the service lines is crucial, but we must also make sure that public water systems have the time necessary to make all the required changes,” said **Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak**. “We must ensure that nothing is rushed and the proper changes are made at a high quality.”

“Replacing the old lead service lines is an absolute necessity to ensure drinking water is safer for everyone in the State,” said **Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli**. “By removing some unnecessary restrictions, we can make the process easier and more efficient for utilities.”

“I would like to commend Governor Murphy and the Legislature for prioritizing the health of all New Jerseyans, especially children,” said **New Jersey Board of Public Utilities President Joseph L. Fiordaliso**. “Today we enact a solution to replace lead service lines, ensuring that all New Jersey residents have clean water to drink, something many of us take for granted, and something so critical for the health and wellbeing of all of our communities and residents.”

“These laws mark important steps forward in our continuing efforts to remove lead hazards in water, paint and dust in older housing stock,” said **New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli**. “Lead is the most common environmental toxin for children and even very low blood lead levels can cause permanent, irreversible neurologic damage. Children spent significantly more time at home during the pandemic, when elevated blood lead levels increased by 29% and lead testing decreased by 20%. We must do everything we can to remove lead from our environment.”

“Protecting New Jersey's water and public health through rigorous water quality standards and infrastructure investments has been a key priority of the Murphy Administration from day one,” said **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette**. “These new laws will accelerate our work to protect every New Jersey community by requiring every lead service line across the state to be replaced over the next ten years. And, New Jersey residents can rest assured that while lead lines are replaced DEP will be protecting their health every day by mandating all water systems to undertake proactive lead risk reduction measures.”

“The signing of these bills is yet another example of how our state protects the health of all New Jerseyans, especially those in overburdened communities,” said **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Deputy Commissioner Olivia Glenn**. “Everyone has the right to live in a lead-free environment. With this regulatory framework, we lead the nation in proactively reducing lead risk. We must be vigilant in lessening lead exposure, especially for our children—the most vulnerable among us.”

“In 2019, some 35,000 New Jersey children tested positive for elevated blood lead levels,” said **Sean Jackson, CEO of Isles, Inc.**, “Today, because of the leadership of this Governor, Senator Ruiz, Senate President Sweeney, and Speaker Coughlin, New Jersey stops using our kids as the canary in the coal mine. With this new law, New Jersey will inspect and correct all rental properties for lead-based paint hazards, before that lead damages the lives and futures of our children.”

“These new laws represent a sea change in how a state can combat lead poisoning. New Jersey is now the first state in the country with a hard target to eliminate lead service lines in ten years, as well as a funding mechanism to finance that investment,” said **Peter Chen, Senior Policy Analyst at New Jersey Policy Perspective**. “New Jersey needs robust infrastructure to protect its residents, especially children, and provide safe and healthy homes to future generations. The new laws recognize that lead is a problem across housing infrastructure, including both water infrastructure and paint. We are one step closer to ending lead’s toxic legacy in our state thanks to this legislation. NJPP sincerely thanks Governor Murphy and the bill sponsors for their tireless efforts to ensure that these bills became law: Assemblyman Gary Schaer, Senator Troy Singleton, Senator Teresa Ruiz, and Assemblyman Jamel Holley. NJPP also thanks the committed advocates who supported these efforts, including Isles, Inc., the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, and the member organizations of the Lead in Drinking Water Task Force convened by Jersey Water Works.”

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