

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request for environmental information. We appreciate your interest, and we want to let you know that your request has been carefully considered in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). As your request contained a number of specific questions, this response, restates each part of the request (in bold) and then follows this with our response.

I would like to request the following information under Environmental Information Regulations (EIR):

1. How many metres of pipe carrying drinking water is your water company responsible for?

The total length of water mains that we are responsible for is 43,270.24 km. This figure will be published in our 2025/2026 [Annual Performance Report](#) (APR) no later than 15 July 2026.

2. How many metres of these water pipes do you suspect or know to contain lead?

Water supplies across the North West are treated with orthophosphate to reduce pickup from lead plumbing, however raised concentrations of lead may still occur when water is in contact with lead pipework for a long period of time (e.g. overnight), or if the lead pipework is disturbed.

United Utilities is responsible for the part of the service pipe which runs from the water main to the highway boundary of a customer's property (also known as the communication pipe). The remaining length of service pipe, from the highway boundary to the inside of a property (also known as the supply pipe) is the responsibility of the property owner.

Our water mains are not made from lead and the water that leaves our treatment works contains virtually no lead. However, water may pick up lead when it passes through the communication pipe that connects the property to our water main in the street, or as it passes through any lead pipes or plumbing materials within a customers' property.

We do not hold the information in the requested format, and as such are unable to provide this in line with Regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIR. However, we do report the number (but not metres) of lead communication pipes, which is also published in our [APR](#). We currently have 493,150 lead communication pipes, and this figure will be published in the 2025/2026 APR no later than 15 July 2026.

3. How many lead tests did you carry out on customers' drinking water in 2023, 2024 & 2025?

Please see the response below.

4. In each year, how many of these tests found a lead level equal to or higher than the regulatory standard of 10 µg/L?



Water for the North West

United Utilities Water Limited
Haweswater House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000
unitedutilities.com

Please see the below table which sets out the number of regulatory lead samples taken per year, as well as the number of those samples which have exceeded 10ug/l. As can be seen in the table below, in total we have taken 9,861 samples, 9 of which are $\geq 10\text{ug/l}$ which equates to 0.091%.

	2023	2024	2025
Lead Samples	3,926	2,922	3,013
(no $\geq 10\text{ug/l}$)	5	2	2

When a lead result is returned that is above 5ug/l, further samples are taken from the original property and neighbouring properties. Two samples are taken from the original property, the first is taken straight from the tap to capture any water that has been sat in a customer’s internal pipework (we term this an unflushed sample) and the second is taken following a 2-3 minute tap flush (we term this a flushed sample). We also arrange for a lead investigation to be carried out at the property.

A lead investigation involves attending the original property to establish the material of the service pipe and whether the property shares any common pipework with neighbouring properties. Where this inspection identifies a lead communication pipe connected to the United Utilities distribution main, it will be replaced with a preferred alternative. Where we identify the property shares pipework with neighbouring properties, we write to these properties to advise of this and include advice on mitigating the lead risk.

Following the replacement of any lead pipework on the United Utilities side of the boundary, additional pre and post flush samples are taken from the original property. In each elevated lead case, customers are provided with flushing advice and information about our [Lead and Common Supply Pipe Scheme | United Utilities](#).

We hope that this response answers your request. However, if you’re not satisfied with how we’ve handled it, you can request an internal review. To do this, please write to us at Environmental Information Office, Haweswater House, Lingley Mere, Warrington, WA5 3LP or email us at EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk, addressing your request to [REDACTED], and explaining why you’re unhappy with our response. We’ll be very happy to review your request and ensure we’ve done everything we can to assist you.

Any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this response, and we will reply within 40 working days from receipt of the request for internal review.

Many thanks



We’d love to hear your feedback on how we handled your request! If you have a moment, please complete our short survey [here](#) – your input helps us improve our service.