



Water for the North West

**United Utilities Water Limited**

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**Our ref:** EIR/ID327

**Date:** 18/03/2025

**Email:** [EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk](mailto:EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk)

Dear [REDACTED],

EIR Reference: EIR/ID/327

Thank you for reaching out with your request! 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).

*I am writing to request information via the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Here is the information I would like to request.*

*I would like to know how many times in the last three years that routine testing has identified water that has lead levels higher than 10 µg/L. For each of these occasions I would like the location, the date and the reading. - From 01 January 2022 to 24 February 2025, there have been 32 occasions where routine water quality sampling has identified lead levels higher than 10 µg/l. This equates to a failure rate of approximately 0.25% based on having taken 12,864 in the past 3 years. Due to data protection, we are unable to disclose the exact location of the failed samples. However, all routine samples that identified lead levels greater than 10 µg/l were taken at properties located across our Water Supply Zones (WSZ).*

When a lead exceedance is identified (greater than 10 µg/l), further samples are taken from the failed property and neighbouring properties. Two samples are taken from the failed property, the first is taken straight from the tap to capture any water that has been sat in the 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 failed property to establish the material of the service pipe and whether the property shares any common pipework with any neighbouring properties. Where this inspection identifies a lead communication pipe connected to the United Utilities distribution main, it will be replaced with preferred alternative. Where we identify the property shares pipework with neighbouring property, we write to these properties to advise on this and include advice on mitigating the lead risk.

Following the replacement of any lead pipework on United Utilities side of the boundary, additional pre and post tap flush samples are taken from the failed property.

In each elevated lead case, customers are provided with flushing advice and information about our 'Lead Replacement Scheme' which is mentioned above.

The data is included in the EIR-327 question 1 data PDF attached.

*I would like to know how many times the UKHSA has been notified of unsafe water levels in the last three years and how many were because of high lead. - We have interpreted this question as 'How many times we have liaised with the UKHSA with respect to sample results from drinking water samples indicating a potential or actual health risk from consuming or using their water and how many of these were due to high lead?'*

We discuss situations where there are potential water quality issues with the UKHSA. We take a risk-based approach, and we may issue precautionary advice to customers, even if we haven't had confirmation that the water supply is contaminated. We do this to protect our customers whilst further investigations are carried out.

The typical situations that result in notifications to the UKHSA relate to contamination of the customer private supply pipework with petrochemicals (e.g. due to a spill of central heating oil in the vicinity of the property or supply pipework) or bacteria, elevated levels of plumbing metals such as *lead* or copper or localised issues affecting turnover within distribution mains.

United Utilities have notified 49 events to the UKHSA in the last three years where sample results, and/or subsequent public health risk assessment indicated a potential or actual risk to health. Of these 49 occasions, 5 were notified due to elevated levels of lead at customers' properties. Investigations carried out in response to these 5 occasions confirmed that the elevated lead concentrations reported in sample results were associated with customer private pipework.

*Where customers have asked for their water supply to be tested in the last three years I would like to know how many times you identified water with lead levels higher than 10 µg/L. For each of these occasions I would like the location, the date and the reading. - From 01 January 2022 to 24 February 2025, when customers have asked for their water supply to be tested for any reason, we have identified water with levels of lead above 10 µg/l in 113 cases out of 7,011 customer samples that have been analysed for lead. Due to data protection, we are unable to disclose the exact location of the failed samples.*

Typically, lead results that are over 200 µg/l may be due to particulate lead if customer's lead pipework is breaking down. Of the 113 cases where lead levels have been above 10 µg/l when customers have asked for their water to be tested, 30 of these were results over 200 µg/l.

The data is included in the EIR-327 question 3 data PDF attached.

*In the last three years I would like to know how much money has been paid in compensation for high lead levels (where the reading was higher than 10 µg/L). - In the past 3 years, our records indicate that we have not paid any compensation with respect to elevated lead levels. There has been no requirement to pay compensation when elevated lead levels have been detected.*

Please see the attached PDF documents which provide more details to questions 1 and 3, respectively.

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](mailto: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.

Kind regards