

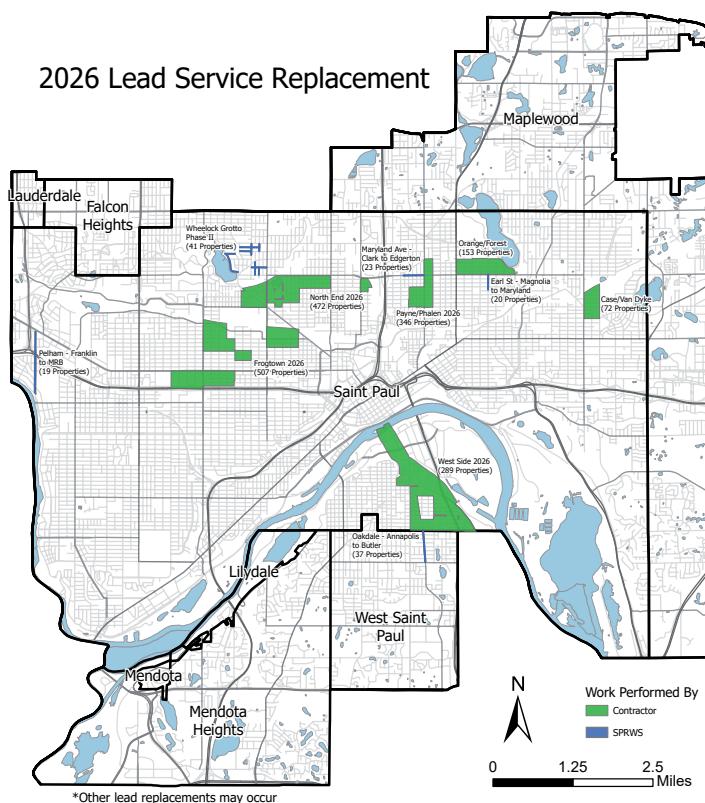


Pipeline Express

Provide high-quality water and exceptional services to the people and communities we support.

2026 Lead Free SPRWS Program: Maintaining Momentum with Major Projects

By Brent Marsolek



Lead Free SPRWS launched as a full program in 2023 after a pilot year in 2022, and it reached its strongest performance to date in 2025. This last year, the program replaced 2,249 lead service lines—an 86 percent increase over the 1,208 replacements completed in 2024.

Plans call for that momentum to continue into 2026. A slate of major projects is already planned, with approximately 2,200 properties selected and deemed eligible for replacement. Those properties are currently on track, positioning the program to sustain its accelerated pace and make measurable progress toward its long-term lead elimination goals.

Replacement work is coordinated with water main upgrades and street reconstruction, a strategy intended to reduce overall project costs and limit repeat excavation. However, this approach can also delay replacements in areas where major infrastructure projects are not scheduled, effectively tying public health interventions to capital construction timelines.

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Additionally, SPRWS selects other replacement areas annually using a multi-factor model that combines cost efficiency, construction logistics, and demographic risk indicators. Projects are prioritized in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of young children, a population especially vulnerable to lead exposure.

The distribution division is slated to perform approximately 300 of the 2,200 replacements this year. The others will be performed by contractors.

2026 Outreach

Our goal once again this year is 90+% participation. Outreach has already begun for eligible properties as of early December. Project letters have been sent to most of the project areas and response is ongoing. Postcards, phone calls, emails, texts, and door knocking follow the initial project letters and these attempts will continue until the contractor has vacated the street.

Major 2026 Projects to be Performed by Contractors

The upcoming year will see six major lead service line replacement

projects spanning multiple neighborhoods.

Frogtown 2026 (~462 replacements)

Generally, south of Pierce Butler, west of Western Ave., north of Interstate 94, and east of Hamline Ave.

North End 2026 (~426 replacements)

Generally, south of Maryland Ave., west of Rice St., north of Front Ave., and east of Como Place.

Payne/Phalen 2026 (~307 replacements)

Generally, south of Ivy Ave., West of Payne Ave, North of Case Ave., and east of Desoto Street.

West Side 2026 (~260 replacements)

Generally, south of Isabel Street, west of the airport, north of Annapolis Street, and east of Robert Street.

Orange/Forest (~137 replacements)

Generally, south of Ivy Ave., west of Wheelock Pkwy., north of Maryland Ave., and east of Arcade Street.

Case/Van Dyke (~64 replacements)

Generally, south of Mechanic Ave., west of Hazel Street, north of Stillwater Ave., and east of White Bear Ave.

Looking Ahead

The plan aims to ramp up to 2,500 replacements in 2027 and 2028, then 3,000 replacements annually in 2029-2032, thereafter scaling down to an appropriate level to finish the program prior to the EPA deadline of November 2037.

The Lead Free SPRWS Team remains confident that the structured ramp-up and gradual scale-down approach will allow for steady progress while maintaining efficiency and minimizing disruptions. With the 2026 projects in motion, the plan remains on track to meet its long-term objective of the removal of all lead service lines.



Ron Reeves: Retires December 1

Ron Reeves retired December 1 after 20 years of service to the water utility.

Reeves was hired in 2005 as a water utility worker I. After working

in that position for several years, he earned a promotion to water systems supervisor I in 2014. This is the position from which he retired on December 1.



Above, Ron Reeves works on the access gate at the Sandy Lake sludge fields in 2009.

At left, Ron Reeves dons protective gear to enter the Dale Street Reservoir in 2007.

JOHN WINJUM PASSES AWAY

John Winjum, retiree, passed away in October



John Winjum

John Winjum, 95, retiree, passed away October 3, 2025.

John Worked at SPRWS from 1972 until his retirement in 1995, for a total of 23 years.

He started off as a water plant aide in 1972. Four years later, he became a filter plant operator. In 1978, he became a maintenance man. In 1989, he took on the role of supervisor of water production maintenance. This is the role from which he retired in 1995.

Our condolences to his family, friends, and former co-workers.

Retirees: Want to Keep Getting the Pipeline?

Retirees who want to continue to get the Pipeline Express in 2026 need to provide Jodi Wallin with their email address by sending that information to Jodi.Wallin@ci.stpaul.mn.us by January 16, 2026.

Demolition of McCarrons Treatment Plant Facilities Continues

The demolition of the McCarrons Water Treatment Plant facilities that have been made redundant by the installation of the new facilities is well underway.

Floc three is being demolished as well as rectangular underground clarifiers three, four and five and the big round clarifier number two. Floc two is being renovated and will eventually hold the new SPRWS water quality lab in that space.

Numerous excavators and cranes are on site of the old plant and a certain amount of noise and cement dust is to be expected as work continues.

Right, floc 2 demolition of specific areas is underway as that area will be reconstructed to become the new water quality lab space.

Below, floc 3 with clarifier number two continue to be demolished and the debris removed.

