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Landlords must tell you about lead in the tap water under bill passed by Senate

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State lawmakers on Monday took a step toward mandating that your landlord in New Jersey must tell you if there's too much lead in your tap water — the latest attempt to address a statewide crisis.

The bill (S968), which passed the state Senate 39-0, would also speed up the timetable for when officials have to notify residents about dangerous amounts of lead. It still needs to be voted on by the state Assembly before it can head to the governor's desk.

“New Jersey's water infrastructure is getting older by the day, and we need to take immediate action to stem the negative effects,” state Sen. Troy Singleton, D-Burlington and the bill's sponsor, said in a statement.

Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, agreed that the change would help, although he cautioned in a statement that “we have a lot more to do.”

While current regulations require landlords to warn new renters about lead, they do not require regular updates for long-term tenants.

Public water systems are required to regularly test water, and officials currently have 60 days to alert residents to elevated lead levels, according to the proposal. The bill bumps up that deadline to 10 days.

Residents would also be told how the water had been measured and how they can protect themselves.

While water may travel for miles from a treatment plant to your home, lead generally enters the water in the few feet between your street and the faucet. That's when the water moves through garden hose-sized service lines, some of which are centuries old and made of lead.

No amount of lead is safe to drink, especially for kids.

A fiscal note concluded that Monday's proposal would likely increase costs, but not significantly.

The proposal dovetails with other similar bills that target the lead crisis. Gov. Phil Murphy signed a bill last month that allows the government to replace lead lines on your property without your permission.