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EPA Provides \$12.7 Million to USVI for Safe Drinking Water

EPA funds aim to eliminate lead contamination risks, enhancing water quality and public health across the territory

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On Thursday, the Environmental Protection Agency announced the allocation of approximately \$12.7 million in funding for the U.S. Virgin Islands, aimed at reducing potential lead exposure from drinking water.

Lead exposure is known for its severe health impacts, particularly the irreversible damage it can cause to children's brain development.

The funding, from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, will be delivered through the EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. It aligns with the broader goals of the Biden administration's Lead

Pipe and Paint Action Plan and the EPA's Get the Lead Out initiative.

"The science is clear," said EPA Administrator Michael Regan. "There is no safe level of lead exposure, and the primary source of harmful exposure in drinking water is through lead pipes." Mr. Regan emphasized that the President has prioritized the swift identification and removal of lead pipes to safeguard public health.

While last year's heavy metal contamination scare in St. Croix ultimately proved to be [largely overblown](#), ensuring an acceptable quality of water running through the territory's pipes is still a priority for officials. "This major injection of funding will further bolster the work to ensure every Virgin Islands resident has access to safe drinking water," said EPA Regional Administrator Lisa Garcia.

Local authorities welcomed the funding, noting that this was the first time federal funds had been allocated specifically to replace lead service lines. "It's crucial for DPNR and other relevant agencies to collaborate closely with the Water and Power Authority (WAPA) to upgrade the territory's water infrastructure," said Jean Pierre Oriol, Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

The funding, according to the EPA, is allocated based on the number of projected lead service lines that must be replaced. It is the latest tranche of funds in a [five-year investment](#) that was authorized through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act.