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‘Fishing’ for lead: Baltimore will use new technology to find contaminated water lines



A technician demonstrates the Swordfish apparatus, created by a California-based company called Electro Scan. Baltimore has signed a \$7.6 million contract to use the technology to detect lead pipes. (Courtesy of Electro Scan).

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Since Baltimore [asked residents in December](#) to test their home’s water line for lead and [submit the results to the city](#), nearly 4,500 have done so.

Meanwhile, about 173,000 properties still have unknown water service pipe materials, said Paul Sayan, acting bureau chief of water and wastewater for the Baltimore City Department of Public Works.

Under a mandate from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the city has 10 years to identify and replace any lead pipes that deliver water to customers, with its first benchmark in October. To get to the finish line, the city now has enlisted the help of a new technology called Swordfish.

In June, Baltimore’s spending board approved a \$7.6 million contract with a California-based company called Electro Scan, which will dispatch its crews around the city to check for lead pipes — using its unique technology that can test for lead without the need to excavate the pipe.

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