



Why Mandatory Water Service Line Inspections Are Being Added to Real Estate Closings

Dimension	Sewer Service Laterals (CCTV INSPECTION)	Water Service Lines (SWORDFISH INSPECTION)
Primary Federal Driver	Clean Water Act (1972).	Safe Drinking Water Act → LCR (1991), LCRR (Mar 2021), LCRI (Dec 2024).
Core Public Interest	Prevent rainfall-based infiltration & inflow that overload wastewater plants.	Prevent lead exposure in drinking water and continued addition of orthophosphates.
Initial Utility Assumptions	Pipes assumed sound unless failures observed.	Pipe materials inferred from records, age, or neighborhood. Unknown for homeowner.
Triggering Problem	Treatment plants forced to treat storm-water-related rainfall.	Utilities required to certify presence/absence of lead pipes.
Regulatory Shift	From system-level compliance to parcel-level defects.	From water sampling to service line material certainty.
Accepted Identification Method	CCTV inspection of laterals.	Physical verification or validated non-destructive testing.
Limitations of Indirect Methods	Dye flood testing, smoke testing, and flow monitoring insufficient.	Predictive models and excavation (potholing) are unreliable or incomplete.
Cost Burden Shift	From municipality or utility to property owner.	From federal Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) to utility & homeowner.
Enforcement Point	Property sale, connection permits, rehabilitation.	Property sale, rental, inventory certification, replacement prioritization.
Market Response	Mandatory CCTV at real estate point of sale.	Emerging ordinances requiring disclosure/certification.
Role of Technology	CCTV enabled scalable enforcement.	Electrical resistance testing enables non-destructive certainty; no digging required.
Legal Defensibility	Video evidence tied to parcel.	Measured material identification tied to parcel.
Ordinance Adoption Pattern	City-by-city, then regional normalization.	Early adopters (e.g., Malden, Mass) signal future nationwide trend.
Outcome	Reduced infiltration, deferred capital spending and homeowner responsibility.	Accurate inventories, targeted replacement, reduced liability, higher water quality.

