

# Drinking Water Work in Lahaina: Addressing Damaged or Contaminated Lateral Water Pipes

April 2024



*Maui gives so much to the world. As guests, we are honored to give our support back.*

On **April 27, 2024**, EPA began work to isolate lateral drinking water lines that were either damaged during the wildfires and/or have been sampled and found to be contaminated. This work will help isolate contamination from the drinking water system and will ensure drinking water is safe for the community.

First, we clear and excavate the area around where a lateral line needs to be isolated. Then the pipe at the connection point to the water main is cut off and then sealed, ensuring that any potential contamination does not enter the main distribution line. This work may be noisy. EPA is working closely with the County of Maui, local cultural monitors, and archaeologists certified by the State of Hawai'i so that, as we complete our work to ensure the safety of drinking water, we also protect and appropriately care for any items of historical or cultural value.



Figure 1: From Left to Right: Crews remove asphalt with a backhoe; An archaeologist inspects the pit; A crew member cuts off a lateral line with a saw.

## What are lateral lines?

Lateral lines run perpendicular to the main service line and bring water from the main line to the meter. The segments that run from the meter to a house, building or business are not a part of this work and are the responsibility of the property owners.

## Why is EPA concerned about lateral lines in Lahaina?

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) are chemicals that can be bad for your health. They are also chemicals that can be released when fires burn building materials and common household items. When there is low pressure in a water system during wildfires, these chemicals from the smoke can be sucked into the water pipes. These chemicals are not easily flushed out and in fact can spread from one part of a water system to other areas. This is why it is important to isolate contaminated and potentially contaminated pipes from the water system after fires like the one in Lahaina where houses burned above waterpipes that experienced low pressure.

## Lateral line sampling and isolation

Since mid-March, EPA has been sampling main service lines and lateral lines within the affected area for VOCs and SVOCs. EPA is analyzing the samples for these contaminants and sharing the data with DWS to assist them in making determinations about water advisories and to determine where lateral lines need to be isolated from the drinking water system. This work will help restore safe drinking water to Lahaina. Before using your drinking water and to see individual property sampling results, check DWS's Unsafe Water Advisory page [mauirecovers.org/water](http://mauirecovers.org/water) to see if water in your area is safe to drink. Daily updates on EPA's water sampling and damaged/contaminated lateral line work are available on the [EPA Wildfires Story Map](#).



**Figure 2: Photo of EPA sampling drinking water in the burned area of Lahaina.**

Please use caution when traveling through areas affected by the wildfires. EPA and partner agencies are actively working throughout Lahaina. The work often involves heavy equipment and loud noises. Safety is a top priority of all response staff and we need your help to keep everyone safe while in the affected area.

### Questions

EPA Hotline: (808) 299-5184, [R9Wildfiresinfo@epa.gov](mailto:R9Wildfiresinfo@epa.gov)

More Information: [www.epa.gov/maui-wildfires](http://www.epa.gov/maui-wildfires)

County Department of Water Supply: (808) 270-7550, [www.mauirecovers.org](http://www.mauirecovers.org)