



February 8, 2021

For Immediate Release

Public Advisory for Drinking Water Customers in the City of Benton Harbor

(Benton Harbor) – The City of Benton Harbor has been conducting ongoing testing of the City’s water supply in accordance with the regulations under the Lead and Copper Rule of the Drinking Water Act for the State of Michigan. Starting in October of 2018, routine testing by the City resulted in an action level exceedance (ALE) for lead. An ALE happens when 10% or more of the homes tested for lead are above the Action Level of 15 parts per billion (ppb).

On February 4, 2021, Benton Harbor found that more than 10% of water samples recently gathered in 66 residences exceeded the target Action Level for lead, resulting in a continued ALE. The 90th percentile for these samples was 24 ppb for lead, with 11 of 66 samples having lead of more than 15ppb. There are many homes in Benton Harbor that have lead service lines, the pipes that deliver water to your home; as a result, the ALE will continue until lead sampling shows less lead so that less than 10% of the samples are above the Action Level.

Since October 2018, the City of Benton Harbor, along with many community partners, have been taking several steps to reduce resident’s exposure to lead. The City of Benton Harbor has successfully started the replacement of the City’s lead service lines, introduced new corrosion controls in the water supply at the City’s Water Plant, and provided ongoing support and education for residents for water testing and understanding how they can limit lead exposure. The City is committed to continuing to take all corrective actions including partnering with the Benton Harbor Water Outreach Task Force.

The Task Force will continue to provide regular updates about lead outreach efforts and lead service lines. Members of the Task Force will include a representative from the Benton Harbor Community Water Council, the City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County Health Department, Andrews University, Freshwater Future, and the Benton Spirit Community Newspaper, along with the Office of the Clean Water Public Advocate, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. If you are interested in helping to support the Task Force, contact EGLE-CleanWater@Michigan.gov. For more information about resources and upcoming events, visit <https://bhcity.us/water/>.

THE HISTORY: Benton Harbor’s water distribution system, which are the pipes that help deliver water to your home, is about 100 years old. It is known that a high number of lead service lines were installed in the first half of the 20th century and many homes built before the 1960s are likely to have lead service lines or pipes that pose a health risk to residents.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY IMMEDIATELY:

- Obtain a lead reducing filter and maintain it by regularly cleaning and changing the cartridge. Berrien County Health Department provides free water filters and replacement cartridges to City of Benton Harbor residents. For help with getting a free water filter, go to: berriencounty.org/1599/City-of-Benton-Harbor. If you are interested in helping to support the Task Force, contact EGLE-CleanWater@Michigan.gov. For more information about resources and upcoming events, visit <https://bhcity.us/water/>.
- Learn about sources of lead, how lead gets into in drinking water, and how to reduce your risk at Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe, Michigan.gov/EGLEleadpublicadvisory, or by calling 1-800-662-9278.

HOW WE ARE FIXING THE PROBLEM:

The City has been replacing lead service lines since 2018 and has installed corrosion control treatment in 2019 to reduce corrosion of lead. Recently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded the City of Benton Harbor a \$5.6 million grant. This funding along with other sources will be used to identify service line materials, replace lead service lines, and study the corrosion treatment. It is our goal to meet the State mandate of replacing all lead service lines in the city by 2041.

FOR MORE INFO:

Looking for more information? Visit <https://bhcity.us/water/> for an overview of the history of the City of Benton Harbor’s water system and current efforts to reduce lead in drinking water. Additional information regarding lead in drinking water and how to reduce risk of lead exposure can be found at Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe, Michigan.gov/EGLEleadpublicadvisory, or by calling 1-800-662-9278. If you are operating a food establishment such as a store, restaurant, bar, or food manufacturing establishment please visit this page www.michigan.gov/mdardleadinfo for specific information for food firms.

Is it OK to use lead-containing water to wash my hands?		
Yes! Human skin does not easily absorb lead from water.		
	<p>Even if you have lead in your drinking water, you can wash your hands with water that is not filtered or flushed.</p> <p>Public Health advises residents to wash hands often and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water to help prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).</p>	<p>You can use water that has not been filtered or flushed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Showering or bathing (avoid swallowing the water)○ Washing hands, dishes, or clothes○ Cleaning
To learn more please visit, Michigan.gov/coronavirus or Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe		