



Joint Press Release

January 23rd, 2019

For Immediate Release

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Townhall Event to Provide Updated Information on City of Benton Harbor Water

(Benton Harbor) – Officials from the City of Benton Harbor and the Berrien County Health Department will jointly host a town hall meeting this Thursday, January 24th at 6pm at Benton Harbor City Hall to provide situational updates regarding the lead levels for drinking water customers of the City of Benton Harbor.

In October 2018, the City of Benton Harbor issued a public advisory to notify water customers that the water system had exceeded the 90th percentile for lead. This required further action including additional investigation into the source of the lead, and educational outreach to customers. Additional water testing was recently conducted by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and will be ongoing as more results are gathered. Based on preliminary results, the recommended flushing time for water has been increased from three to five minutes to at least five minutes. Future recommendations may change based on information obtained from additional MDHHS testing and results.

Out of an abundance of caution, and as a precaution while the MDHHS water testing is ongoing, it is recommended that residents use a water filter certified to reduce the potential exposure to lead in the water. Recommended filters have the certification number NSF Standard 53. The Berrien County Health Department is establishing a process to distribute filters to residents at no cost to residents.

Residents are encouraged to attend the scheduled town hall meeting to receive further updates about lead levels in the water and information about precautionary actions everyone can be taking to reduce the risk of lead exposure. Representatives from the City of Benton Harbor, the Berrien County Health Department, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality will be available to answer questions. The town hall event will be broadcast live on the Berrien County Health Department Facebook page.

All Benton Harbor water customers are reminded to take the following precautionary actions to reduce their exposure to lead:

- Residents who do not have a filter or have not used their water for six hours or more should flush their pipes to reduce the amount of lead in their drinking water. Pipes can be flushed by running faucets, taking a shower, running a load of laundry or washing dishes for at least five minutes. After flushing, run the water from your faucet until cold before drinking or cooking with the water.
- Use cold tap water for drinking and cooking.
- Use bottled water for preparing baby formula or use Ready-to-Feed formula.
- Do not boil the water, as boiling will not reduce the amount of lead in the water.
- Clean faucets' aerators or screens at least every six months. For more information on how to clean your aerator, see the "[Cleaning Your Aerators](#)" fact sheet.

The Berrien County Health Department continues to monitor the blood lead levels of children six and under throughout the county by individual community, as children under the age of 6 are at the greatest risk. There have been no detected increases in the number of elevated blood lead levels in Benton Harbor children. The number of elevated blood lead levels in children has been on a downward trend.

More information regarding lead in drinking water can be found at www.bhcity.us or www.bchdmi.org. For more information about lead in general, visit Michigan.gov/lead or lead in water, visit Michigan.gov/deqleadpublicadvisory.

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