



July 15, 2020

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. During this ongoing compliance testing, it was found that water samples gathered in 63 residences from January through June 2020 exceeded the Action Level of 15 parts per billion (ppb) for lead within those household samples. The 90th percentile for these samples was 23 ppb for lead, with nine of the sixty-three samples having lead levels in excess of 15ppb, ranging from 21ppb to 400ppb.

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 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 necessary to educate residents, improve the community water supply, and replace lead service lines with the goal of eliminating lead exposure in drinking water for residents. Find more information regarding the Action Level Exceedance and the City's drinking water at <https://bhcity.us> or by contacting the City of Benton Harbor Water Plant Director Mike O'Malley at 269-363-0575 or momalley@bhcity.us

Elevated levels of lead can cause health concerns. All Benton Harbor water customers are reminded to take the following precautionary actions to reduce their exposure to lead in drinking water:

- Public health officials recommend that any household with a child or pregnant woman use cold water and a certified lead filter to reduce lead from their drinking water. Look for filters that are tested and certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 53 for lead reduction, especially when preparing baby formula. If you are not able to afford the cost of a lead filter, please contact the Berrien County Health Department. More information about obtaining a certified water filter and replacement cartridges can be found at www.bchdmi.org or by calling 800-815-5485.
- Residents who do not have a filter and 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 for at least five minutes, or by taking a shower, running a load of laundry or washing dishes. After flushing, run the water from your faucet until cold before drinking or cooking with the water.
- Do not use hot water for drinking, preparing food, or cooking, or preparing baby formula.
- Consider using 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.

Additional information regarding lead in drinking water and how to reduce risk of lead exposure can be found at Michigan.gov/EGLEleadpublicadvisory, Michigan.gov/MILeadSafe, or by calling 1-800-662-9278.

Benton Harbor Water Quality: Update for Residents

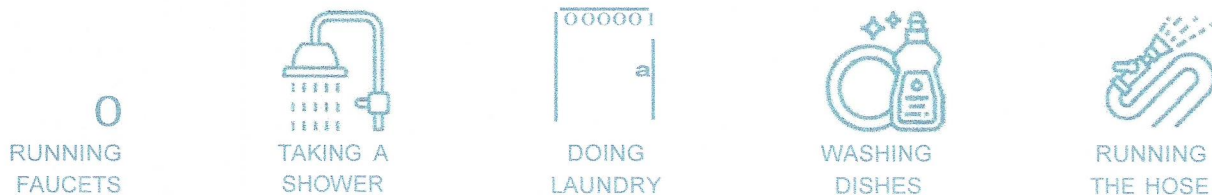
In 2018, it was discovered that there was a problem with high lead levels in tap water in Benton Harbor. The City performed routine monitoring for lead and copper by sampling at homes connected to the Benton Harbor Water Supply and found that more than 10% of these samples exceeded the Action Level for lead. The samples collected in previous rounds did not have the same elevated results.

Can I have my tap water tested for lead? If so, how?

To determine if your home qualifies to be included in City testing (homes with lead service lines), call Mike O'Malley at 269 363-0575. If your home isn't eligible for the compliance program; there are other options for testing. The City may be able to connect you to a certified lab, or you can directly contact a certified lab. A list of certified labs is available at [Michigan.gov/EGLE lab](https://www.michigan.gov/EGLE/lab).

What can I do as a resident to ensure my tap water is safe?

Get your water moving. Flushing water pipes can reduce the amount of lead in your water. If you have not used your water for several hours, flush your pipes following your public water supply's recommended amount of time by doing any of the following:



For more information on what to do after plumbing changes inside or outside the home, go to: bit.ly/391ycD£.

Use a point-of-use water filter. A certified lead-reducing filter can reduce lead in drinking water. Filters are made to reduce lead, but do not guarantee that all lead will be removed from drinking water. For more information on choosing a POU water filter, go to bit.ly/2vaHLkO.

Clean your faucet aerators. Clean the mesh screen, or aerator, on the end of your faucet at least every six months. If construction is being done to the water system or pipes near your home—including water meter replacement in your home—check and clean your drinking water faucet aerator every month until the work is done. Go to bit.ly./2Jg/QvE for more information.

Consider replacing older plumbing, pipes, and faucets that may add lead to water. Older faucets, fittings, and valves sold before 2014 may contain up to 8 percent lead, even if marked "lead-free." Look for replacement faucets made in 2014 or later and make sure they are NSF 61 certified or marked to contain 0.25 percent lead or less. Check your plumbing or hire a plumber to know what parts should be replaced to reduce lead in your drinking water.

What actions have been taken since the city learned of the lead issue in tap water?

Many efforts are underway to measure and minimize corrosion. **The first action that was taken was to tell the residents of the city of Benton Harbor that there were elevated levels of lead in the drinking water** and how to protect themselves by running their water, and/or, by obtaining a lead reducing water filter.

The Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) began providing filters in 2019. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services provides the funding for the filter and BCHD provides staffing and locations to distribute the filters. For help with securing a water filter, go to <https://www.berriencounty.org/1568/Lead-Drinking-Water>.

The City has begun replacing lead service lines. This is an important step because the best way to reduce lead levels is by removing the sources of lead in the system. Because removal of all lead service lines is going to take quite some time, the city has also installed corrosion control treatment to help reduce the amount of corrosivity of the water, which will reduce lead levels.

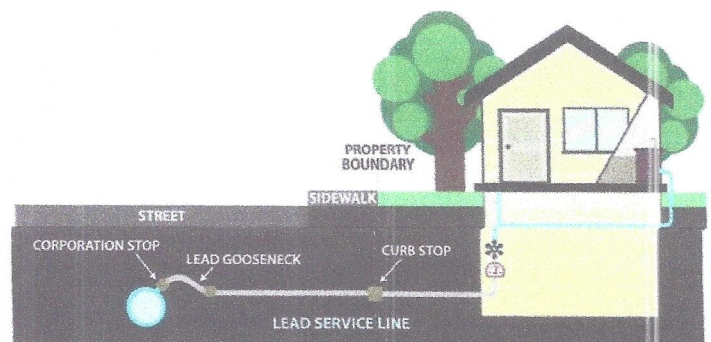
The City has increased the monitoring of lead and copper. The City is now sampling twice as many homes as they were previously, and they are sampling those homes more often (every 6 months instead of every 3 years). *This sampling is done so that everyone knows the levels of lead and copper in the system, and to show when the corrosion control treatment has become effective in lowering the levels of lead.

What remains to be done in order to reduce lead in tap water below the Action Level?

The Lead and Copper Rule requires collecting samples from a number of homes, reporting the results to the residents of those homes, and reporting the results to the state. Benton Harbor will have resolved the Action Level Exceedance when the corrosion control treatment has reduced lead levels in homes, and two back-to-back six-month rounds of sampling confirm this. Both six-month sets of sampling must have a 90th percentile that is less than 15 parts per billion. The City is also required to conduct a study of the corrosion control treatment to identify if the most effective treatment to reduce lead. Currently, the City has hired a qualified expert to propose a detailed plan and begin the study.

Since there is no lead in the water that comes from Lake Michigan or in the water as it leaves the water treatment plant, how does lead get into the water?

Drinking water is free of lead until it is in contact with lead containing materials, such as lead service lines. Then as it sits in contact with lead containing materials the lead begins to be dissolved into the water. The longer that water sits motionless and in contact with lead containing materials the more lead it can "pick up". Most of the lead containing materials *that can be in contact with drinking water* are found in the service line (the water line coming from the water main in the street into your home) or within your home in the form of pipes, solder, or brass.



See page one for more information on reducing the amount of lead in your drinking water.