

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY  
DRINKING WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION



**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ADVISORY REQUIREMENTS  
AND DISTRIBUTION CHECKLIST**

**FOR COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLIES THAT EXCEED THE LEAD ACTION LEVEL**

Issued under the authority of the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act, 1976 PA 399, as amended (Act 399), and the Administrative Rules. Act 399, MCL 325.1019 et seq. requires that, if a water supply is found not to be compliant with the state drinking water standards, they shall be required to notify users of the extent and nature of the noncompliance. Complete and submit this form to EGLE

Act 399 requires that a Public Advisory (PA) must be issued within three business days after the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) notifies a water supply that an exceedance of the lead action level has occurred. To meet this requirement, water supplies may use this checklist to document the PA issuance activities.

Distribution must be reasonably calculated to reach all persons served by the water supply. Send this checklist, or similar documentation, to EGLE along with a sample copy of the issued PA.

**START HERE** (indicate one or more of the following activities)

- Issue the PA using appropriate broadcast media, such as radio and television. Please list media outlets and date of broadcast: WSSM (news + radio)  
ABC57, WSBT, Benton Spirit 8/5/2021
- Post the PA in conspicuous locations throughout the area served by the public water supply. Locations posted and date of posting: City of Benton Harbor  
City Hall 8/5/2021
- Hand deliver the PA to each person served by the water supply. The water supply may use electronic transmission instead of, or combined with, printed materials as long as it achieves at least the same coverage. Date delivered: \_\_\_\_\_
- Use a communication method other than one listed, as approved in writing by EGLE. Date delivered: City of Benton Harbor's website 8/5/2021

I affirm that the Public Advisory has been issued. I have enclosed a copy of the Public Advisory.

Ellis E Mitchell  
Signature

City of Benton Harbor  
Water Supply Name

Ellis Mitchell  
Printed Name

Water Supply Serial Number (WSSN)

City Manager  
Title

8/6/2021  
Date

Send this checklist to the appropriate EGLE district office. Contact information for the district offices can be found online at [Michigan.gov/CommunityWater](http://Michigan.gov/CommunityWater). Under Information, click on "District Offices Map and Contact Information."



**August 4, 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. On August 2, 2021, Benton Harbor found that more than 10% of water samples recently gathered in 78 residencies exceeded the Action Level of 15 parts per billion (ppb) for lead, resulting in Benton Harbor's sixth Action Level Exceedance (ALE). The 90th percentile for these samples was 24 ppb for lead, with 11 of 78 samples having lead samples in excess of 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 is continuing to replace the City's lead service lines, maintaining corrosion control in the water supply at the City's Water Plant, and providing ongoing support and education for residents with 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 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](mailto:EGLE-CleanWater@Michigan.gov). For more information about resources and upcoming events, visit <https://bhcity.us/water/>.

**THE PROBLEM:** 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:** 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. While the city is replacing lead service lines, you should routinely replace your filter cartridge.

For help with getting a free water filter or replacement cartridges, call 800-815-5485 or go to: [Berriencounty.org/1599/City-of-Benton-Harbor](http://Berriencounty.org/1599/City-of-Benton-Harbor). Learn about sources of lead, how lead gets into






in drinking water, and how to reduce your risk at [Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe), [Michigan.gov/EGLEleadpublicadvisory](https://Michigan.gov/EGLEleadpublicadvisory), or by calling 1-800-662-9278.

**HOW IS THE CITY FIXING THE PROBLEM:** The City began replacing lead service lines in 2019 and will continue this project until all lead lines have been replaced. Since these replacements will take some time, the city has installed corrosion control treatment to help limit corrosion of the current infrastructure and reduce lead levels in the meantime. The State of Michigan requires public water supplies to replace all lead service lines by 2041.

**GET YOUR WATER MOVING:** If you have not used your water for several hours, flushing your pipes may reduce the amount of lead in your drinking water. To get your water moving, you can do anything that uses water including washing dishes, doing load of laundry, and taking a shower. For more information about flushing, visit [Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe).

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](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe), [Michigan.gov/EGLEleadpublicadvisory](https://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](http://www.michigan.gov/mdardleadinfo) for specific information for food firms.

<b>Is it OK to use lead-containing water to wash my hands?</b>		
<b>Yes!</b> 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"> <li>○ Showering or bathing (avoid swallowing the water)</li> <li>○ Washing hands, dishes, or clothes</li> <li>○ Cleaning</li> </ul>
To learn more please visit, <a href="https://Michigan.gov/coronavirus">Michigan.gov/coronavirus</a> or <a href="https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe">Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe</a>		



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

On August 3, 2021, Benton Harbor found that more than 10% of water samples recently gathered in 78 residences exceeded the Action Level of 15 parts per billion (ppb) for lead, resulting in Benton Harbor's sixth Action Level Exceedance (ALE). The 90th percentile for these samples was 24 ppb for lead, with 11 of 78 samples having lead sample in excess of 15 ppb. 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.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND KEY NEXT STEPS

The **Benton Harbor Water Outreach Task Force** will 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. Additional community partners will be added to help support the work of the Task Force.

In October 2020, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded the City of Benton Harbor nearly **\$5.6 million grant**. This funding along with additional state grants and loans will help remove lead service lines and support a study to improve the city's lead corrosion control treatment to protect public health in Benton Harbor.

**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. For more information about the risks and potential sources of lead, visit [Michigan.gov/MILeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MILeadSafe). These articles were published in the Benton Spirit Community Newspaper and also summarized below:



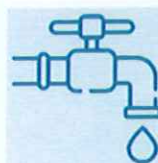
**THE PROBLEM:** Benton Harbor's water distribution system, which are the pipes that help deliver water to your home, is about 100 years old. It is known that a high number of lead service lines were installed in the first half of the 20th century and many homes built before the 1960s are likely to have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



**HOW TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY:** 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. While the city is replacing lead service lines, you should routinely replace your filter cartridge. For help with getting a free water filter or replacement cartridges, call 800-815-5485 or go to: [berriencounty.org/1599/City-of-Benton-Harbor](https://berriencounty.org/1599/City-of-Benton-Harbor).



**HOW IS THE CITY FIXING THE PROBLEM:** The City began replacing lead service lines in 2019 and will continue this project until all lead lines have been replaced. Since these replacements will take some time, the city has installed corrosion control treatment to help limit corrosion of the current infrastructure and reduce lead levels in the meantime. The State of Michigan requires public water supplies to replace all lead service lines by 2041.



**GET YOUR WATER MOVING:** If you have not used your water for several hours, flushing your pipes may reduce the amount of lead in your drinking water. To get your water moving, you can do anything that uses water including washing dishes, doing load of laundry, and taking a shower. For more information about flushing, visit [Michigan.gov/MILeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MILeadSafe).

*If you are interested in helping to support the Task Force, contact [EGLE-CleanWater@Michigan.gov](mailto:EGLE-CleanWater@Michigan.gov).  
For more information about resources and upcoming events, visit <https://bhcity.us/water/>.*



# 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 Ellis Mitchell at 269-927-8400. 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/EGLElab](https://Michigan.gov/EGLElab).

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

1

**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:



RUNNING  
FAUCETS



TAKING A  
SHOWER



DOING  
LAUNDRY



WASHING  
DISHES



RUNNING  
THE HOSE

For more information on what to do after plumbing changes inside or outside the home, go to: [bit.ly/391vcD0](https://bit.ly/391vcD0).

2

**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](https://bit.ly/2vaHLkO).

3

**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/2JqIQvE](https://bit.ly/2JqIQvE) for more information.

4

**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 [berriencounty.org/1599/City-of-Benton-Harbor](http://berriencounty.org/1599/City-of-Benton-Harbor).

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.

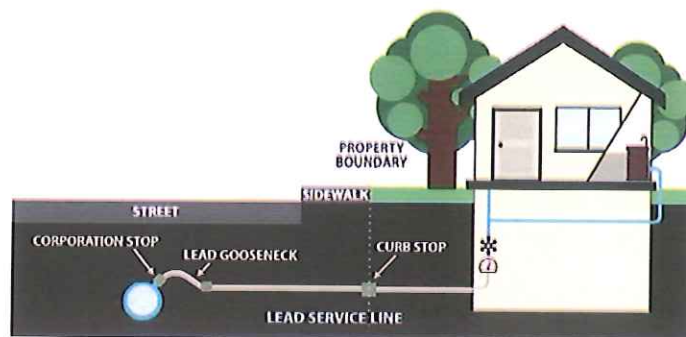
The City has increased the monitoring of lead and copper. The City is now sampling twice as many homes as they were previously, and they are sampling those homes more often (every 6 months instead of every 3 years). \*This sampling is done so that everyone knows the levels of lead and copper in the system, 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 the most effective treatment to reduce lead. Currently, the City is seeking a qualified expert to propose a detailed plan for 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.*

*You can learn more about the dangers of lead to health at this link:*

<https://www.berriencounty.org/1568/Lead-Drinking-Water>