



Joint Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Media Contacts:

Gillian Conrad, Berrien County Health Department
269-927-5624 or gconrad@bchdmi.org

Shawn Foster, Village of Eau Claire
269-461-6173 or eauclaireclerk@gmail.com

Berrien County Health Department Offers Water Filters to Residents in Village of Eau Claire

Officials Jointly Respond to Recent Lead Action Level Exceedance in Water System

(Berrien County) - Through a Public Advisory issued today, the Village of Eau Claire announced to its water customers that the water system had exceeded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Michigan regulatory Action Level for lead. In response to this Action Level Exceedance for lead in drinking water, the Berrien County Health Department will offer lead-reducing water filters to households in the Village of Eau Claire with children or pregnant women who have financial need. Water filters will be available for those who qualify at Eau Claire Village Hall on Friday, November 1st from 2:00PM to 6:00PM and Tuesday, November 5th from 2:00PM to 6:00PM.

Out of the nine (9) homes sampled in the Village of Eau Claire during recent compliance testing, there was one (1) home that had lead levels in the water that were above the regulatory Action Level of 15 parts per billion (ppb). The Village of Eau Claire does not have lead in its water mains or service lines. However, lead can enter drinking water when it has contact with lead pipes, solder, fixtures or faucets and/or home interior plumbing. Water customers in the Village of Eau Claire who would like their drinking water tested or their service line inspected are encouraged to contact the Village at 269-461-6173.

When at least 10% of the samples tested exceed the action level for lead in drinking water (15ppb), public health officials recommend precautionary actions to protect residents from potential lead exposure while further water testing is ongoing. Lead exposure can pose a

serious health risk for children and unborn children because their bodies and nervous systems are still developing. The use of water filters is recommended in any residence served by the Village of Eau Claire water system that is home to a child or a pregnant woman. If a household has a child or pregnant woman and receives WIC benefits, Medicaid insurance, or cannot afford a water filter, they can receive a free filter and replacement filter cartridges from the Berrien County Health Department. The free filters are part of a larger response in partnership with the Village of Eau Claire, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) that includes distributing educational materials and helping residents identify ways to lower their exposure to lead.

In homes with children or pregnant women, the Berrien County Health Department also recommends using only cold filtered (or bottled) water for drinking, rinsing food, cooking, mixing powdered infant formula, and brushing teeth. When buying a water filter, make sure it is certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 53 for lead reduction and NSF/ANSI Standard 42 for particulate reduction. It is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions for installing and maintaining the filter.

Other ways to reduce the amount of lead in your drinking water include:

- Run your water for 30 seconds to two minutes to flush out lead after it has been sitting stagnant for 6 hours or more.
- Clean your faucet aerators, which can trap small pieces of lead.
- Use only cold water for drinking or cooking; lead dissolves more easily in hot water, so do not try to remove lead by boiling the water.
- Identify older plumbing fixtures that likely contain lead.

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 not been any children with elevated blood lead levels in the Village of Eau Claire within the past year. Families who wish to have their child's blood tested for lead are encouraged to speak with their family doctor.

Lead exposure from drinking water only accounts for a small portion of the other potential sources of lead. The majority of lead exposure comes from lead paint dust, paint chips, and soil contaminated with lead. Lead-based paints were banned for use in housing in 1978, but it is still commonly found in older homes and can pose a risk to children who can inhale the lead paint dust or ingest peeling or chipped lead paint. For more information on how to identify potential lead hazards and remove them safely, please visit www.bchdmi.org to learn about lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes.

Residents with questions are encouraged to call the Berrien County Health Department Water Response Hotline at 1-800-815-5485. More information regarding lead in drinking water and your health can be found at www.eauclairemi.com or www.bchdmi.org or Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe.

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