Message

From: Aguirre, Janita [Aguirre.Janita@epa.gov]
Sent: 9/22/2021 8:24:48 PM
To: Clark, Liesl (EGLE) [ClarkL20@michigan.gov]; Fox, Radhika [Fox.Radhika@epa.gov]
CC: StrongR1 [StrongR1@michigan.gov]
Subject: RE: regina email

Thank you! Regina will receive the invitation momentarily.

Best,
Janita
Janita Aguirre – Chief of Staff
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | Office of Water
Phone: **(202) 566-1149** | Email: **aguirre.janita@epa.gov**

From: Clark, Liesl (EGLE) <ClarkL20@michigan.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 22, 2021 4:23 PM
To: Fox, Radhika <Fox.Radhika@epa.gov>
Cc: Aguirre, Janita <Aguirre.Janita@epa.gov>; StrongR1 <StrongR1@michigan.gov>
Subject: RE: regina email

Thanks, Regina is cc'd for email.

From: Fox, Radhika <Fox.Radhika@epa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 22, 2021 4:16 PM
To: Clark, Liesl (EGLE) <ClarkL20@michigan.gov>
Cc: Aguirre, Janita <Aguirre.Janita@epa.gov>
Subject: regina email

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please send suspicious emails to abuse@michigan.gov

Liesel can you send janita copied here regina address? Could you please add her to t he 5pm

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From: Clark, Liesl (EGLE) <ClarkL20@michigan.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, September 21, 2021 3:20 PM
To: Fox, Radhika <Fox.Radhika@epa.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Update on Benton Harbor

FYI

From: Keatley, Aaron (EGLE) <KeatleyA@michigan.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, September 21, 2021 3:01:34 PM
To: Newton, Cheryl <Newton.Cheryl@epa.gov>
Cc: Clark, Liesl (EGLE) <ClarkL20@michigan.gov>
Subject: Update on Benton Harbor

Cheryl –

Below, please find an update on activities Michigan is taking in Benton Harbor and the state related to lead abatement. We are working on compiling the additional data requested by Tara last Friday. We hope to provide that information to her later this week.

I appreciate your support of the actions the State of Michigan has taken to ensure the residents of Benton Harbor have access to reliable and safe drinking water. As you are aware, protecting the public's health and safety is a top priority for this administration.

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have been actively engaged with the Berrien County Health Department (BCHD), City of Benton Harbor, and local community members and organizations to help ensure residents have access to safe drinking water.

The state has dedicated significant resources to the city of Benton Harbor and is currently undertaking many actions that go beyond what is required by the Lead and Copper Rule to educate the public, improve the city's drinking water quality, and protect public health. The state is working to get people the help they need right now while also making lasting, structural investments in the state's water infrastructure system.

Following are actions that are currently underway in the City of Benton Harbor to ensure residents have the support and resources they need.

Lead and Water Exposure, Prevention and Mitigation Immediate Response Plan

The state and local community have developed a detailed Lead and Water Exposure, Prevention and Mitigation Work Plan with clear objectives and set timelines to accomplish the following goals:

- By October 8, 2021, ensure every household in Benton Harbor has been visited and offered access to a free water filter as part of the residential door-to-door program and expanded outreach and education efforts.
- By October 15, 2021, implement a robust public education and community outreach campaign to increase awareness of the city's current water quality and the availability of water filters and resources for residents.
- By October 30, 2021, develop a sustainability plan to ensure public health resources are available to support resident health and wellness, including access to lead mitigation measures and blood-lead level testing for adolescents and children 6 and younger.

Critically, this plan includes a **door-to-door effort** to swiftly visit every household in Benton Harbor to provide access to a water filter, educational materials on the proper use of the filter, instructions on getting replacement cartridges, a hotline phone number for questions, and current information on the health risk of lead in the tap water. As a part of this plan, DHHS will establish an ongoing '**Water Ambassadors Program**' designed to identify and recruit trusted non-government community members to assist with individual outreach to help build trust with the community. Filter education and resources are also available for commercial businesses.

To supplement this work out of an abundance of caution for public health, **bottled water is being provided** to local organizations for distribution within the community. While filters are effective and it's important to keep water moving throughout the distribution system, an alternative water source is being provided until October 8, 2021, over a two-week period, when every home in the city has been visited and offered a water filter.

Expedited Lead Service Line Replacement

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has committed to use every federal, state, and local resource available to replace 100% of the lead service lines in Benton Harbor on an expedited timeline of five years. As a part of this commitment, the governor announced her proposal to provide $200 million additional funding statewide for lead service line removal, including $20 million for Benton Harbor.

The Governor negotiated a budget that included $10 million for an additional investment to replace lead service lines in Benton Harbor and $15 million for the Emergency Drinking Water Fund to help the state address future drinking water emergencies. As part of this investment, the state will also provide technical support to communities dealing with lead service line removal.

These investments are in addition to the state's $3M MI Clean Water lead service line removal grant and the state's work to support the City with securing $5.6 million in EPA WIIN grant for the replacement of lead service lines in 2020. Together, the State has leveraged $18.6M and has committed to replacing 100% of the City's lead service lines.

Lead Abatement Programs

The DHHS and EGLE created MI Lead Safe to provide educational resources that families and communities can use to protect themselves from lead exposure by utilizing safe water flushing and filtering practices, as well as to provide information and links to programs to address other sources of lead in homes. Under this administration, Michigan has adopted the strictest lead and copper rule in the nation.

For families in Benton Harbor, EGLE's Office of Clean Water Public Advocate convened the Benton Harbor Water Outreach Taskforce, a multi-sector team of community-based, local and state partners working together to ensure that Benton Harbor residents have access to information and free resources to reduce lead in water. The State has also acted consistently since the community's first lead exceedance to protect Benton Harbor families, including, but not limited to, providing free filters for the community, and providing assistance with fixing residential plumbing.

Additional information on EGLE's response efforts can be found here.

Other

Residential Water Testing

The City is offering residents the opportunity to have their water tested free of charge. DHHS conducts sequential water testing in homes where the EGLE had identified elevation.

Resources for pregnant women and families

The state has implemented a media campaign to promote getting young children tested for lead. In addition to this communications work, the state has provided local hospitals and WIC clinics with lead education and filter access for new parents leaving the hospital, pregnant women, and women with children.

Resources for housebound individuals
Meals on wheels delivers filters and lead education materials to individuals who are homebound.

General state assistance programs

The DHHS has increased their targeted communications on MI Bridges benefits to ensure Benton Harbor families know what benefits are available to them. Cash assistance, food assistance, and nutrition programs are also available for residents.

Berrien County Health Department Response

The BCHD implemented a filter distribution plan in February 2019. This ongoing program provides residents with access to free point-of-use or pitcher filters and filter replacements. In addition, there is a hotline for residents to call to have a filter mailed or delivered to their home. The health department has also held pop-up events and supported other community efforts to provide filters and educational materials.

As stated above, we will respond to your subsequent request sent on September 17 regarding water quality and testing data in the coming days but wanted to respond to this initial request as soon as possible.

Above all, protecting the public's health and safety is a top priority. We look forward to the continued partnerships in Benton Harbor and look forward to the Environmental Protection Agency's continued support of our efforts to protect public health and ensure residents have access to safe drinking water.

Aaron Keatley
Chief Deputy Director
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
517-284-6709 (office) | 517-285-8921 (cell)
Keatleya@michigan.gov
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