STATE OF MICHIGAN

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GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

ELIZABETH HERTEL
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Oct. 22, 2021

CONTACT: Bob Wheaton
517-281-1701
WheatonB@michigan.gov

Additional sites planned for City of Benton Harbor water distribution

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) worked closely with the Berrien County Health Department and many local community partners to provide additional bottled water over the last few days until service was fully restored after the recent water main break.

"I was both amazed and humbled by our community," said Debbie Ramirez, director of volunteer engagement for United Way of Southwest Michigan. "We put the call out for volunteers late on Wednesday night for a really early morning on Thursday. The response was incredible. Just as incredible were the folks who drove by the high school, saw what was going on and stopped to help. Regardless of where they lived, what they do every day or what plans they had for the day, the residents of Benton Harbor and the surrounding community heeded the call and came with servant hearts to help.

"One community resident unexpectedly joined the volunteers at the Southwest Community Action Agency warehouse to load cases of water into other vehicles," said Ashley Slack, operations manager for the agency. "She said she was so grateful for those who were willing to share their time and energy during the early hours of Thursday and she wanted to do her part as well. She stayed for about 45 minutes before saying goodbye because she was on her way in to work."

Free bottled water is being provided by the state as residents are being encouraged to use bottled water for cooking, drinking, brushing teeth, rinsing foods and mixing powdered infant formula.

This action is part of an accelerated, across-the-board effort to reduce the risk of exposure to lead in drinking water while the city replaces all lead service lines. This collaborative effort includes the City of Benton Harbor, the Berrien County Health Department, local community organizations, MDHHS and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

Home delivery started

Efforts to support homebound residents and those without transportation began this week. Today the Berrien County Health Department and Mario Morrow & Associates community partners from Mosaic Christian Community Development Association and Greater Community Christin Fellowship Church delivered 1,167 cases of water to 212 homes. This was for Benton Harbor residents who are homebound or had no access to transportation to pick up water.

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To arrange water delivery to homebound or residents without transportation in the city of Benton Harbor, residents can contact 211, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Updated water distribution sites

MDHHS was made aware at the last minute that God's Household of Faith canceled its commitment to distribute water this afternoon. Bottled water was delivered to the site and was ready to be distributed. MDHHS realizes the people of Benton Harbor have been through a lot and regret that they were inconvenienced. MDHHS and the Boys and Girls Club are sponsoring an event tomorrow and will have additional water for pickup.

Saturday, Oct. 23

- Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor, 600 Nate Wells Sr. Drive, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Please be aware that the Harbor of Hope Seventh-Day Adventist Church previously publicized from 4-6 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 23, was mistakenly identified as a distribution site. No water is being distributed there on Saturday.

Sunday, Oct. 24

- Abundant Life Church of God, 693 Columbus Ave., 3-5 p.m.
- Brotherhood of All Nations, 1286 Monroe St., 4-6 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 25

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller St., 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Self-service)
- Abundant Life Church of God, 693 Columbus Ave., noon-2 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 26

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller St., 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Self-service)
- Abundant Life Church of God, 693 Columbus Ave., noon-2 p.m.
- Ebenezer Baptist Church, 214 E. Britain Ave., 4-6 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 27

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller St., 1-3 p.m.

Additional dates and locations for bottled water pick up will be added to make sure community needs are met. Information will be posted on Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe.

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Mailer to hit homes next week

MDHHS is mailing all residents a flyer that provides them with resources to protect their families. Residents can expect to receive the flyer as early as next week – and it is also available on the Benton Harbor water website.

The flyer is part of the state's accelerated, across-the-board effort to reduce the risk of exposure to lead in drinking water while the city replaces all lead service lines.

It explains when tap water can be used and when bottled water should be used. It also provides resources for free bottled water distribution, food assistance and other assistance programs. One side of the mailing is in English and the other is in Spanish.

MDHHS is engaging in a long-term effort to eliminate lead action level exceedances, educate communities on the effects of lead in drinking water, and remove lead service lines. This collaborative effort includes the City of Benton Harbor, the Berrien County Health Department, local community organizations, MDHHS and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

For questions about lead, MDHHS can be reached at 866-691-5323 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

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