

# 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 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.

## 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/>.*