STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

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Additional contractors, plumbing inspectors sought to accelerate lead pipe replacement in City of Benton Harbor

LANSING, Mich. – As part of the accelerated effort to replace all lead service lines in the City of Benton Harbor in 18 months, additional contractors are being sought for service line replacement and two plumbing inspector positions have been posted by the State of Michigan. This is part of an across-the-board, whole-of-government effort to ensure residents have access to safe, clean drinking water.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer called for the **replacement of lead service lines in Benton Harbor in 18 months** and the Whitmer-Gilchrist Administration has provided nearly $20 million to Benton Harbor to speed up its service line replacement timeline. Governor Whitmer also signed an executive directive that implemented an all-hands-on-deck approach to move forward with urgency in replacing lead service lines in the city.

As part of that effort, the City of Benton Harbor is seeking additional contractors to complete replacement of various lead/galvanized water services throughout the city. More information is provided on engineering firm Abonmarche's website and the deadline for bids is Dec. 17.

In addition, the state is seeking applicants to fill two part- or full-time plumbing inspector positions that will be stationed in Benton Harbor**.** Applicants must apply online no later than Dec. 13.

There is no cost to City of Benton Harbor residents for lead service line replacement. To assist with assuring the work can be completed as soon as possible, residents are encouraged to complete the **Water Service Line Replacement Agreement** available online. Contractors cannot begin work on any property without property owner authorization. Completed forms can be returned to Abonmarche, 95 West Main Street, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 or emailed to **bvasher@abonmarche.com**.

To reduce the risk of lead exposure to city residents while the service lines are being replaced, free bottled water continues to be provided by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and local, paid residents. City of Benton Harbor residents are being encouraged to use bottled water for cooking, drinking, brushing teeth, rinsing foods and mixing powdered infant formula.

To arrange water delivery to homebound or residents without transportation in the city of Benton Harbor, contact 211, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Phones that cannot contact 211 should contact 844-875-9211.

The upcoming schedule for bottled water pickup is:

Tuesday, Nov. 30

- Abundant Life Church of God, 693 Columbus Avenue, noon - 2 p.m.
- Ebenezer Baptist Church, 214 E. Britain Avenue, 4 - 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 1

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller Street, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., (Self-service)

Thursday, Dec. 2

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller Street, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., (Self-service)
- Ebenezer Baptist Church, 214 E. Britain Avenue, 10 a.m. - noon.
- Brotherhood of All Nations, 1286 Monroe Street, 4 - 6 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 3

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller Street, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. (Self-service)

Saturday, Dec. 4

- Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor, 600 Nate Wells Sr. Drive, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.,
- Harbor of Hope Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 769 Pipestone Street, 4 - 6 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.

The ongoing response in Benton Harbor includes the city, Berrien County Health Department, local community organizations, MDHHS and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

To ensure the continued success of bottled water distribution locations in Benton Harbor and to recognize the city residents who have been stepping up to donate their time and talent, the State of Michigan has partnered with local agencies to pay city residents who work at state-supported bottled water distribution sites. Individuals who want to serve as community ambassadors to help distribute water should connect with an established distribution site. Individuals or groups who want to serve as unpaid volunteers can sign up **on the United Way's online platform**.

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.

These efforts also include recently approved funds to remove lead from homes in the city. Families living in Benton Harbor can apply for this service by filling out and mailing **in an application that is available online**. Residents also can call 866-691-5323 to obtain information.

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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