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Contact the City Manager's Office at (248) 530-1810

City responds to new state rules for lead testing in tap water

BIRMINGHAM, MI, October 7, 2019 – In 2018, the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act (MSDWA) was changed to include more stringent procedures for testing and analysis for lead and copper. The new regulations are intended to have a more proactive approach in monitoring each community's lead and copper levels.

Since 1992, the City of Birmingham, which has close to 9,000 total water customers, including approximately 550 houses with lead pipes (or roughly 6%) that connect to the city's water main, has regularly tested for lead and copper. In that time, the City's testing results have never exceeded the state standard. The MSDWA changed what is to be tested, and how the testing is to be done. The new state lead standard is 15 parts per billion (ppb). The state requires cities whose testing exceeds the new standard to provide a public education campaign advising homeowners of actions they can take to mitigate any lead that may come from their pipes. As a result of these changes, Birmingham and other Michigan cities expected that exclusively testing homes with lead service pipes would have lead levels that now exceed new state standards.

This expectation was realized when, in September 2019, in accordance with the MSDWA, Birmingham tested 32 of the 550 houses with lead service pipes. Of these 32 houses with lead pipes, five houses showed levels above the new state standard (15 ppb), triggering a public advisory and public education campaign. The testing under this new method resulted in a rating of 17 ppb, two parts per billion above the new state standard.

"As a proactive measure, the City is alerting all of its water customers, whether their house has lead service pipes or not, on practical steps they can take to reduce the risk to lead exposure, particularly for those whose houses have lead service pipes," said **Birmingham City Manager, Joe Valentine**. "While the Action Level exceedance is not a health-based standard nor a violation of the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act, we do want the public to be aware of this change, our results and what it means to them. The intent is not to scare the public, but let them know the City is proactively working to test and address known lead service leads in the City and work with property owners who want to improve water quality in their homes." Among the steps the City will take includes more testing and an extensive public education campaign, as well as, providing filters to all home that exceed the state action level.

To start the public education process, the City has set up a dedicated webpage on its website at www.bhamgov.org/leadtesting that features a host of information to further inform the public. The page includes steps the public can take to do home tests, as well as, learn about further resources with the State of Michigan and Oakland County Health Division.

"I'm pleased the State has taken a more aggressive posture with testing and reporting lead and copper in our communities as we all work to ensure our residents have confidence in the water coming out of their taps," said Mayor Patty Bordman. "In Birmingham, it is important to

know the source of our water, and the process used to treat it, have not changed. I would encourage anyone with questions to visit our website for further information.”

In conjunction with the City, the Oakland County Health Division will provide complimentary water filters for economically disadvantaged members of the City who meet State mandated thresholds on **Tuesday, October 8th from 4 p.m.-7 p.m. at Birmingham City Hall (151 Martin Street)**). To qualify,

Your household must have at least one of the following:

- A child under age 18 living there.
- A child under age 18 spending several hours every week at least 3 months of the year there.
- A pregnant woman living there, **AND**

Your household has at least one of the following:

- Someone receiving WIC benefits and/or Medicaid insurance.
- Difficulty affording a filter and replacement cartridges (filters cost about \$35 and replacement cartridges cost about \$15.)

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy or EGLE (formally the MDEQ) is the state department that evaluates compliance with the Action Level of all lead and copper results collected in each round of sampling. More information on their program can be accessed at www.michigan.gov/MILeadSafe.

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City of Birmingham – A Walkable Community. Visit the city’s web site at www.bhamgov.org.