

**Leigh-Anne Stafford, Health Officer**  
(248) 858-1280 | health@oakgov.com

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

### Oakland County assists two local municipalities taking action to prevent lead exposure

Pontiac, Mich., Oct. 7, 2019 – Oakland County Health Division (OCHD) is assisting the City of Birmingham and White Lake Township after water samples from testing of water supplies for lead and copper identified homes that exceed acceptable lead levels for municipal water systems. Water testing occurred as part of routine compliance sampling required by Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) under Michigan’s Safe Drinking Water Act.

“The quality of our drinking water is paramount and we stand ready to support our local communities with these and future test results,” Oakland County Executive David Coulter said. “Oakland County Health Division is working with communities to help them comply with revised lead rules, including distributing NSF-certified water filters to qualified households and to educate the public.”

“The lead level exceedances found in Birmingham and White Lake will trigger further investigation to determine the source of exposure as well as significant public education efforts. Though we only operate 17 drinking water systems in Oakland County, the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner’s Office will work with all Oakland County communities in their efforts to educate the public and develop their responses. We stand ready to help,” said Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner Jim Nash.

Preventative actions taken by collaborating agencies include:

- Municipalities, Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS), and OCHD are conducting water sampling and investigations.
- The Health Division is coordinating distribution of free water filter kits and providing public education to qualifying households. To qualify for a filter the household must:
  - Receive water from a Lead Action Exceedance area.
  - Have a pregnant woman or at least one child under age 18 living or spending several hours in the home weekly who receives WIC benefits, Medicaid health insurance, or has difficulty affording a filter (\$35) or replacement cartridges (\$15).

(more)

## Oakland County assists two local municipalities taking action to prevent lead exposure

### Page 2

- Water filter kits will be available to Birmingham and White Lake residents who qualify at the following locations:
  - **Birmingham: Tuesday, October 8, 2019**, 4:00-7:00 p.m. at Birmingham City Hall, 151 Martin St. Birmingham
  - **White Lake: Thursday, October 10, 2019**, 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Lakeland High School, 1630 Bogie Lake Rd., White Lake
- Answering public questions:
  - Water testing/lead service line questions: City of Birmingham Engineering Department at (248) 530-1840 or White Lake Township Department of Public Services at 248-698-3300 ext. 171.
  - Health related questions: Oakland County Health Division's Nurse on Call at 1-800-848-5533 Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. or [www.oakgov.com/health](http://www.oakgov.com/health).
- Oakland County Health Division has a laboratory that is certified to test residents' water for lead and copper.

"No level of lead in water is desirable. What we do together next will define how serious we are about protecting drinking water for everyone, and for future generations," said Oakland County Board of Commissioners Chairman David T. Woodward (D-Royal Oak). "This is not just a local issue, and not just an Oakland County issue, but it does require bold leadership at all levels to fix. We have revised rules that have changed compliance testing standards. We all must act to protect drinking water for all."

Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome plated brass faucets and fittings, and in some cases, pipes made of lead.

"According to Centers for Disease Control, lead is most damaging to children age six and younger and pregnant woman," said Leigh-Anne Stafford, health officer for Oakland County. "Childhood lead poisoning most commonly occurs by breathing in lead dust, eating food items containing lead, or chewing on surfaces covered with lead-based paint."

There are several things that you can do to reduce the risk of lead in drinking water:

- If you suspect that your home's plumbing or faucets could contain lead or lead-based solder, you should **have your water tested**.
- **Replace faucets** with those made in 2014 or later or marked "NSF 61/9" since they meet stricter limits.

(more)

## Oakland County assists two local municipalities taking action to prevent lead exposure

### Page 3

- **Flush your cold-water pipes** by running the water for approximately five minutes. The longer the water has been sitting in the pipes, the more lead it may contain. You can fill containers for later use, after the flushing process.
- **Use cold filtered water or bottled water** for drinking, cooking, and especially for making baby formula. Hot water is likely to contain higher levels of lead.
- **You may choose to install a water filter that is certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 53 for lead reduction.** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also recommends the filter be certified for NSF/ANSI Standard 42 for particulate reduction (Class 1). If a water filter is installed, replace cartridges at least as often as recommended by the manufacturer.
- **Do not boil water** to remove lead. Boiling will not remove the lead.
- **Clean aerators.** Aerators are small attachments at the tops of faucets which regulate flow of water. They can accumulate small particles of lead in their screens. Remove and sanitize monthly.

For up-to-date information, visit [www.oakgov.com/health](http://www.oakgov.com/health) and follow the Health Division on Facebook and Twitter @publichealthOC.

For MEDIA INQUIRIES ONLY: Contact Bill Mullan, Oakland County media and communications officer, at 248-858-1048.

### **Additional resources:**

Mi Lead Safe Lead and Copper Rule Frequently Asked Questions

[https://www.michigan.gov/mileadsafe/0,9490,7-392-92852\\_93738---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mileadsafe/0,9490,7-392-92852_93738---,00.html)

Mi Lead Safe Drinking Water

<https://www.michigan.gov/mileadsafe/0,9490,7-392-92796---,00.html>

Public Advisory-Birmingham

[https://www.bhamgov.org/government/departments/dps/lead\\_and\\_copper\\_testing.php](https://www.bhamgov.org/government/departments/dps/lead_and_copper_testing.php)

Public Advisory-White Lake Township

<http://www.whitelaketwp.com/services-departments/water-department>

Oakland County Health Division Lead and Drinking Water Fact Sheet

<https://www.oakgov.com/health/information/Pages/Lead-and-Drinking-Water.aspx>

###