

This Notice is posted as The Benton Harbor's Water Community's Right to Know.

It was written and distributed at the End of October, 2011 by Water Department Staff and the Water Department Superintendent, Michael O'Malley.

Important Information Regarding Your Benton Harbor Drinking Water

Tests showed Coliform bacteria in a single distribution site. And, Lead and Copper Monitoring requirements were not properly met in Benton Harbor.

Our water system recently violated 2 drinking water standards. One standard has to do with Coliform bacteria testing and must be communicated within 30-days. The second standard has to do failing to complete monitoring and testing and has to be communicated within 1-year. Although, neither of these incidents were an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened and what we did to correct the situation.

In regards to the Coliform bacteria Event this September:

We routinely monitor for drinking water contaminants such as Coliform bacteria. We took 19 samples to test for the presence of Coliform bacteria during September 2011. Two of those samples at 1 site showed the presence of Coliform bacteria. The MDEQ and EPA standard is that no more than 1 sample per month may have a presence of Coliforms.

What should I do? There is nothing you need to do at this time. This is not an emergency. You do not need to boil your water or take other corrective actions. However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor. People with severely compromised immune systems, infants, and some elderly may be at increased risk. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their healthcare providers. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

What does this mean? This is not an emergency. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately. Coliform bacteria are generally not harmful themselves.

Coliforms are bacteria which are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other, potentially harmful, bacteria may be present. Coliforms were found in more samples than were allowed and this was a warning of potential problems.

Usually, Coliforms are a sign that there could be a problem with the system's treatment or distribution system (pipes). Whenever we detect Coliform bacteria in any sample, we do follow-up testing to see if other bacteria of greater concern, such as fecal Coliform or E. coli, are present. We did not find any of these bacteria in our subsequent testing, and further testing shows that this problem has been resolved.

What happened? What was done? Two Coliform bacteriological samples collected from a single location shown the presence for total Coliform bacteria during September 2011. Follow-up sampling from upstream and downstream locations indicated no bacteria were present. The City continues to routinely sample the water to ensure its safety.

In Regards to the Lead and Copper Monitoring for 2011:

We are required to monitor your drinking water for many other types of contaminants on a regular basis. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether or not our drinking water meets health standards. During 2011 we did not complete all the testing for lead and copper and therefore cannot be sure of our drinking water meets the requirement for the lead and copper regulations.

What should I do? There is nothing you need to do at this time. This is also, not an emergency. You do not need to boil water or use an alternative source of water.

Lead and Copper testing is required to be done every 3 years and were to be taken this year between June 1,

2011 and September 30, 2011. 30 Homes in Benton Harbor were to be sampled and tested. The City of Benton Harbor's water department only was able to collect and test water from 23 homes in late September this year. Because 30 samples were required, the City of Benton Harbor's water department did not meet the sampling requirement with only 23 samples. Because only 23 of 30 samples were collected, the City of Benton Harbor's water department is required to notify you and will be required to sample 30 homes again in 2012 between June 1, 2012 and September 30, 2012. The water department will have to seek assistance from 7 or more home owners next summer to meet this regulation.

Please note that 23 home owners did help the water department by collecting the samples this year. The test results from all of the 23 homes were well below the limits set by the EPA for Lead and Copper. A complete set of results will soon be available to the 23 home owners and to all the Benton Harbor Water System Customers.

This notice was sent to our water customers by a service offered by the US Post Office, called "Every Door Direct". This service assures the water department of complete coverage at affordable postage rates. If you are not a water customer of the City of Benton Harbor, please forgive this inconvenience.

If you know someone who may not have received this notice or may not understand it, Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

Additional copies can be downloaded off the Web Site or can be obtained at the Water Plant.

For more information, please contact the City of Benton Harbor Water Treatment Plant at 269-927-847. Or e-mail Michael O'Malley, Water Superintendent at momalley@bhcity.org