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*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

TO: Public News Media Sources

FROM: Joel R. Strasz
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DATE: **November 21, 2019**

RE: BAY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT OFFERS LEAD-REDUCING WATER FILTERS TO ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS IN ESSEXVILLE

In response to excessive lead levels found in drinking water provided through the City of Essexville water system, the Bay County Health Department is providing lead-reducing water filters to eligible households within the city limits of Essexville. The free filters are part of a larger response that includes distributing educational materials and helping residents identify ways to lower their exposure to lead. The Bay County Health Department along with Essexville Water Department staff will be distributing filters at Essexville City Hall on November 22nd from 11 am to 7 pm to those who are eligible and interested. The Health Department will also be answering any questions for Essexville residents.

Because children and fetuses are most at risk of harm to their health from lead, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recommends the use of NSF certified water filters in any residence within the city limits of Essexville and served by the Essexville Water Supply that is home to a child or a pregnant woman. Eligibility for the free water filters includes the following:

- **Residency within the City of Essexville AND**
- **A household with a child under the age of 18 or pregnant woman AND**
- **Currently receives WIC benefits, Medicaid insurance, OR**
- **Cannot afford a water filter.**

Residents who are coming to the water filter distribution need to bring a driver's license or state identification card for address verification. Also, it is recommended that residents take a picture of their faucet to assist in identifying which filter they will receive.

Residents that want to purchase filters or get additional filters, the cost is about \$35, and their replacement cartridges cost approximately \$15 and can be bought at a local home improvement store. Filters will not be available for purchase at the event.

Drinking water provided through the Essexville Water Supply was found to be above the action level of 15 parts per billion in at least 10 percent of the homes tested in Essexville. When lead in drinking water is above the action level, public health officials recommend precautionary actions to protect residents—especially those most at risk of harm to their health: children and fetuses. Swallowing lead can be a serious issue for children because their bodies and nervous systems are still developing. Too much lead can cause problems with learning, behavior, speech, hearing, and growth rates.

In homes with children or pregnant women, MDHHS recommends using only **cold filtered water** for drinking, rinsing food, cooking, mixing powdered infant formula, and brushing teeth. Bottled water could also be used for these activities. When buying a water filter, make sure it is certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 53 for lead reduction and NSF/ANSI Standard 42 for particulate reduction. It is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions for installing and maintaining the filter.

Other ways to reduce the amount of lead in your drinking water include:

- Regularly flushing your home's pipes for 30 seconds to 2 minutes as recommended by the Essexville Water Supply. If your home has a lead service line you may wish to flush the home's pipes for up to 5 minutes.
- Cleaning your faucet aerators, which can trap small pieces of lead.
- Using only **cold water** for drinking or cooking; lead dissolves more easily in hot water.

Lead cannot be removed by boiling water. Water evaporates during boiling, so the amount of lead in the water may end up higher after boiling.

For more information, call the Bay County Health Department at 989-895-4006 or visit our website at <https://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/Default.aspx> For information about lead and your health, visit Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe.