



# News Update



**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
*Caring today for a healthy tomorrow*

December 8, 2017

## Update on Groundwater near House Street in Belmont



**“Send The EPA,”** says Majority of Michigan Congress Members  
Understanding Your Test Results  
KCHD Updates Health Survey Status

### Michigan Lawmakers Encourage Large EPA Role in Addressing Water Contamination

Twelve Congressional delegates from Michigan are echoing the Kent County Health Department’s desire to have the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) take a larger role in solving the issues of contaminated water in Kent County and around the state. The bipartisan group made the request to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in a letter dated December 5, 2017.

The letter begins, “We write to urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to continue to actively engage in assisting the State of Michigan’s and the Department of Defense’s efforts to address serious public health threats stemming from exposure to perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) across multiple communities in our state. This problem is of such severity that the State of Michigan recently created a PFAS Action Response Team (MPART). We also believe that further engagement by the EPA on this growing problem is consistent with your stated goal of refocusing the agency on actions that directly protect public health and safety.”

mLive reports that a unnamed EPA spokesperson has confirmed the agencies receipt of the letter and assured a response through “proper channels.”

KCHD asked in a November letter to Gov. Rick Snyder that he request help from the EPA. Adam London, Administrative Health Officer at KCHD, expressed concerns that the state has “not activated federal resources that would benefit the citizens of Kent County” and that “Kent County is prepared to ask for this sort of assistance (from EPA) if the state of Michigan declines.”

“I do appreciate the fact that the Governor’s office is taking this seriously,” London told WOOD TV after Snyder’s office had received the letter. Carol Issacs, head of the newly formed MPART team has been in contact with London. She says that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the EPA have been contacted and a dialogue has started. London remains optimistic, “I am satisfied to date. We are going to carefully monitor that and we are going to represent the people of Kent County.”

### Reading Your Water Test Results

Are you having a difficult time understanding you lab results? Many of us have never tried to read a scientific report of this nature before. This week we asked KCHD Lab Manger, Dr. Allyson Chirio to help explain some of the most commonly asked questions we are receiving.

*Dr. Allyson Chirio  
Regional Laboratory Manager  
Kent County Health Department*

#### Sampling Instructions

When you have your water tested it is important to follow the sampling instructions provided. Each test parameter has a unique set of instructions specific for the test. For example, when your doctor orders a cholesterol test the requirement is to fast for 12-14 hours prior to having your blood drawn. The fasting instructions are so that the lab result accurately represents the amount of cholesterol in your body. This is the same for drinking water samples. If the sampling procedure is not followed, the results may not be an accurate reflection of the water supply. For complex environmental testing the sampling instructions are very specific and usually require the collector to have training prior to collecting samples

#### Units of Measurement

Not all water test results use the same units for reporting, it is important when you are looking at your water report to make sure you know whether a specific test is measured in PPM (parts per million), PPB (parts per billion) or PPT (parts per trillion) and if there is an action value sometimes referred to as an MCL or Maximum Contaminant Level. Comparing the value recovered from your drinking water sample to the MCL will let you know whether the amount of the contaminant is harmful and what the possible effects are to your health.

#### MCL (Maximum Contamination Level)

Not all water tests have an established MCL. Tests like Hardness and Iron have levels where you may see staining and calcium buildup, but they are not considered harmful. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) establishes MCLs or Health Advisory levels based on evidence, some parameters do not have enough evidence to support having a health advisory.

#### MRL (Minimum Reporting Limit)

The MRL is an important number. If the MRL for a test is 40, this means that 40 is the lowest number the laboratory can detect accurately. In other words, if the sample was 39, the result will be reported as “not detected” or sometimes <40 (less than 40). This does not mean zero, it means that the lab cannot accurately provide a value if the result is less than 40. If you want to know if whether a substance is in your water, you want to look for a laboratory that has a low MRL. The lower the MRL the more sensitive the test will be.

For specific information and guidance on how to interpret your sample test results please contact Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) at 1-800-648-6942.

### KCHD Health Study Update

*Brian Hartl  
Supervising Epidemiologist  
Kent County Health Department*

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) continues its analysis of data from the Michigan Cancer Registry to determine the rates of urogenital cancers in 12 census tracts in the northern region of Kent County. The initial analysis combined all urogenital cancers (including prostate, kidney, bladder, testicular, etc.) diagnosed between 2000 and 2014 together to calculate an overall rate. Because previous epidemiologic studies have identified probable links between PFAS exposure and kidney and testicular cancer, MDHHS is performing additional analyses to calculate specific rates for these cancers. Prior to the release of the data, it will need to be reviewed by the recently formed Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART). The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) has not been provided a timeframe for the release of the data.

KCHD continues to work with MDHHS on the development of a health effects survey. The first draft of the survey has been reviewed by KCHD and MDHHS staff to identify areas for improvement and KCHD is currently in the process of creating the second draft. Initial methods for conducting the survey have been completed and are also currently being reviewed by MDHHS staff. KCHD staff will meet with MDHHS on December 18 to discuss their review of the survey methods. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, KCHD remains on track to release the survey within the first few months of 2018.

### DEQ’s Ongoing Efforts on the PFAS Investigation

*from Joshua Scheels,  
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality  
Incident Management Specialist  
Remediation and Redevelopment Specialist*

“DEQ continues their efforts to investigate potential dump sites for the presence of PFAS-type contamination. DEQ experts continue working towards identifying and eliminating these potentially impacted locations to ensure protection of public health.”

**Editors note:** DEQ submissions to this newsletter are printed in their entirety and are not edited for content.



### About This Newsletter

This newsletter is a weekly publication of the Kent County Health Department. Unless otherwise stated, all articles are written by KCHD staff. This newsletter will publish weekly as long as the need for timely information regarding the PFAS situation is warranted. Articles written by MDEQ or MDHHS will be accepted and will appear unedited and the authoring agency will be identified. As a courtesy KCHD has agreed to send updates from Wolverine Worldwide to this mailing list. Those mailings will arrive under separate cover to your inbox.

### Resources

#### Wolverine Worldwide

[HouseStreet@wwwinc.com](mailto:HouseStreet@wwwinc.com)  
(616) 866-5627

#### For information regarding possible health effects of PFAS and PFOA

##### The Kent County Health Department

616-632-7100

[KCPFAS@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:KCPFAS@kentcountymi.gov)

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)

1-800-648-6942

#### For information about the status of the investigation and water sampling

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Environmental Assistance Center via their online form [HERE](#) or 800-662-9278

#### For House Street specific site information

##### Rose and Westra, a Division of GZA

Mark Westra/Lori Powers

[mailto:House-Street@gza.com](mailto:mailto:House-Street@gza.com)

(616) 258-7234

#### For information about the Plainfield municipal water system

##### Plainfield Water Department

(616) 363-9660

#### For questions about tax/property values

##### Plainfield Township Assessing Department

Jeff Miller (616) 726-8880