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CONTACT: Suzanne Cupal, MPH
Public Health Supervisor

PHONE: (810) 768-7970

RE: Legionella Prevention Event

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) will be hosting an educational presentation to local building facilities managers to promote Legionella prevention in complex water systems. The event will take place on Friday, May 20, 2016 beginning at 9:00 AM, in the Harris Auditorium located on the third floor of the Genesee County Administration building, 1101 Beach Street downtown Flint.

The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) has developed a standard aimed at the prevention of Legionnaires' disease. It was created as a voluntary consensus standard by a committee comprised of academic, industry, and government subject matter experts. By creating a framework for proactively managing building water systems and reducing the potential for Legionella bacteria colonization of these systems, this should prevent many cases of Legionnaires' disease. Michael Patton of ASHRAE, will be on hand to summarize the standard and to provide technical support to local building facilities as they work to implement the guidelines.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed a toolkit to aid building managers in understanding the ASHRAE standards by identifying areas in their buildings where *Legionella* might grow or spread and how to reduce that risk. This toolkit was developed with input from GCHD and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Service and will be debuted at the event.

GCHD will be following up with these building managers during the course of the summer to monitor their process in creating building water management plans. All three Genesee County medical centers have been working to implement the ASHRAE guidelines.

Legionella is a type of bacteria commonly found in the environment that grows best in warm water, such as hot tubs, cooling towers, hot water tanks, drinkable water systems, and decorative fountains. When people are exposed to the bacteria, it can cause Legionnaires' disease, a respiratory disease that can infect the lungs and cause pneumonia.

Most healthy people do not get sick after being exposed to *Legionella* bacteria. Being 50 years old or older, or having certain risk factors increases the chances of getting sick. Other risk factors include being a current or former smoker; having chronic lung disease, such as emphysema or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; having a weakened immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure; or taking medicine that weakens your immune system. Legionnaires' disease in children is not common.

For any resident that develops pneumonia symptoms, you should see a doctor right away. Signs and symptoms of pneumonia can include cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, headache, and high fever. Be sure to tell the doctor if you have used a hot tub, spent any nights away from home, or stayed in a hospital in the last two weeks. Legionnaires' disease requires treatment with antibiotics, and most patients can be treated successfully.

To RSVP for the May 20th event call 810-257-3812. For more information about Legionnaires' disease visit the GCHD website at www.gchd.us.

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Floyd J. McCree Courts & Human Services Building ♦ 630 S. Saginaw Street, Ste. 4 ♦ Flint, Michigan 48502-1540

Burton Branch ♦ G-3373 S. Saginaw Street ♦ Burton, Michigan 48529

Main Phone 810-257-3612 ♦ Visit us at: www.gchd.us