



# Public Health

September 23, 2021

Mayor Mark Hammond  
25500 Gibraltar Road  
Flat Rock, MI 48134

Re: Flat Rock Emergency Response - MDHHS Evaluation for Clearance of Zone 1 Investigation Area

Dear Mayor Hammond:

The Wayne County Local Health Department (WCLHD) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) have reviewed the results of the air monitoring conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in response to the gasoline leak in the Flat Rock sanitary sewer system. Per the Flat Rock Re-Occupancy Plan, the objectives of the re-occupancy process are to provide a protocol that will: (1) *demonstrate that the source of gasoline and gasoline-related vapors, the sanitary sewer system, has been mitigated in the impacted area;* and (2) *demonstrate that exposure to gasoline-related vapors has been mitigated and no longer poses a public health or occupational threat to the occupants of residential and non-residential properties in the impacted area* (Flat Rock Re-Occupancy Plan, September 10, 2021).

Using an analysis of air monitoring tests conducted in the sewer system and previously identified homes with elevated benzene levels or gasoline odors, MDHHS has determined that the precautionary evacuation recommendation can be lifted for the area of Flat Rock identified as "Zone 1" for the emergency response to the Ford Motor Company gasoline leak into the sanitary sewer. However, this determination does not apply to occupants of homes that initially had elevated levels of benzene or had their homes tested by EPA because of odor complaints (i.e., potentially impacted homes). These homes require further analysis before residents can receive their final clearance letter. (Please also see the enclosed Health Consultation letter from MDHHS to WCLHD).

**Based on these results and after consultation with MDHHS, the WCLHD concludes that residents of the Zone 1 precautionary evacuation area can return to their homes, with the exception of the potentially impacted homes.** Today, WCLHD will be reaching out to the residents of the potentially impacted homes to provide specific guidance about their individual situations.

As a reminder, Zone 1 is an area of Flat Rock bounded by I-75 to the east, Gibraltar Road to the north, Cahill Road to the west, and Woodruff Road to the South.

As you know, once the gasoline leak on the Ford Motor Company property was identified and stopped, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) conducted extensive jetting and flushing of the sanitary sewer in residential areas to eliminate the unsafe vapor levels. The expectation was that the flushing of the sewers would reduce the gasoline vapors in the sewer system. On September 15, 2021, EGLE and the EPA reported that the sanitary sewer was clear and back to normal operating conditions.



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## **Sewer and Home Indoor Testing Validation**

Residents may wonder why we do not need to test the air in each home. As it would take months to test the air in hundreds of houses, MDHHS and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) used a scientific method to estimate the indoor air levels in homes based on sewer testing. The team used data from several houses across Flat Rock that initially had elevated benzene levels or gasoline odors inside their homes to confirm that sewer testing can be used to validate that air levels in homes are below health levels. Thus, the determination to lift the precautionary evacuation recommendation is based upon a validated scientific model that included air samples from the sanitary sewer lines and a sampling of homes impacted by the Ford gasoline release.

## **Resident Requested (Voluntary) Sampling**

As you know, the voluntary sampling already requested by individual residents at homes is ongoing and supported by Ford. Residents' questions about voluntary testing should be directed to the Flat Rock 24-Hour Hotline at 734-782-2455 ext. 6 or ext. 1105.

## **Community-Wide Air Test Results**

To view community-wide air test results, please visit:

<https://epa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/419e31aa64074c3e9c6a77ae0919fb87>.

We understand that residents may have questions after reviewing the air monitoring test results for Zone 1. The WCLHD has asked MDHHS to provide support to residents regarding questions about the sewer and air monitoring results. Toxicologists at MDHHS are available to answer questions from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 1-800-648-6942.

Please contact me at [causterb@waynecounty.com](mailto:causterb@waynecounty.com) if you have other questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

Carol Austerberry  
Health Officer, Director  
Wayne County Local Health Department

Enclosure