



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: Local Media

From: Central Michigan District Health Department's Environmental Health Division

RE: Time of Transfer Program for Isabella County

Release Date: December 18, 2017

CMDHD Time of Transfer Program for Isabella County Begins January 2018

The Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) is announcing the first change to the District Sanitary Code in 20 years. The amendment to the Sanitary Code will help protect the health of our community and our environment. Beginning with title transfer agreements signed on or after January 5, 2018, all properties in Isabella County served by onsite sewage systems and water wells that transfer ownership are required to have the sewage system and well inspected by a certified inspector. Inspection and authorization for transfer by CMDHD is required prior to title transfers through traditional sales contracts, Land Contracts, Quit Claims, or other forms of real property title transfers.

Certified inspectors submit reports to the CMDHD for review of conformance with minimum standards. Properties that meet minimum standards will be issued an approval for transfer by CMDHD. Repairs or upgrades will be required before transfer for any properties served by failed sewage systems or water wells at risk of contamination. Having wells and sewage systems that are maintained properly helps prevent diseases in humans and the contamination of our watershed, which we rely on for our drinking water, recreation, and tourism.

The amendment to the code was over a year long process that began with the formation of an Isabella County ad-hoc committee looking into solutions related to E. coli contamination found in the Chippewa River. The committee learned that malfunctioning and unpermitted sewage systems were contributing to E. coli contamination not just in a section of the river but throughout the county and watershed. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality estimates statewide at least ten percent of the 1.2 million onsite sewage systems are in a state of failure at any given time. Since this problem is not unique to Isabella County, the committee

looked at how other counties addressed this problem. A process was needed to identify and fix on-site sewage systems and wells that are not functioning properly.

The common solution employed by eleven counties and five townships throughout Michigan was a point of sale or time of transfer program. The committee looked at common elements of these programs and began public discussion of a draft proposal. CMDHD presented the draft to any local real estate offices that wanted to know more about the program and sought input on the draft. Real estate professionals brought their ideas to the ad-hoc committee resulting in several positive changes to the proposal. A final draft was presented to the CMDHD Board of Health where it was approved and sent on for approval by the county boards in Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon counties.

The new Isabella County Time of Transfer program will apply to all properties that utilize onsite sewage disposal and onsite water wells when the title is transferred, including traditional sales and land contracts at the time they are created. Some exceptions provided for include foreclosures, immediate family transfers, adding or removing a spouse, or demolition of the structure. Over the next several weeks CMDHD will be adding information about the program to our website, communicating with real estate professionals and title companies, and providing certification training to home inspection professionals.

Communities that have had similar programs in place have identified and corrected thousands of failed onsite sewage systems resulting in the proper treatment of millions of gallons of sewage. A similar number of water wells have been repaired and no longer pose a threat to ground water or expose owners to potential harmful organisms. Inspecting onsite sewage systems and water wells before property transfers will further enhance our community's commitment to protect our children, provide a safer environment for property owners, ensure our recreational resources are protected, and encourage tourism. For additional information contact the CMDHD environmental health staff at 989-773-5921, extension 3.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org, LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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