

Public Health

September 20, 2021

Mayor Mark Hammond
25500 Gibraltar Road
Flat Rock, MI 48134

Re: Flat Rock Emergency Response - MDHHS Evaluation for Clearance of Zone 2 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).

Based on an analysis of air monitoring tests conducted in the sewer system and previously identified homes with elevated benzene levels or gasoline odors, we concur with the evaluation by MDHHS that the area of Flat Rock identified as the "Zone 2" investigation area for the emergency response for the Ford Motor Company gasoline leak **is safe for evacuated residents to return to their homes.** (Please also see the enclosed Technical Assistance letter from MDHHS to WCLHD.)

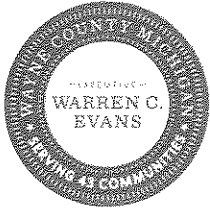
As you know, once the gasoline leak on the Ford Motor Company property was identified and stopped, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) conducted extensive jetting and flushing of the sanitary sewer in residential areas to eliminate the unsafe vapor levels. The expectation 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 is clear and back to normal operating conditions.

Furthermore, EPA tested several previously impacted homes in Zone 2. These homes either had an elevated level, or was next to a home with an elevated level, of benzene shortly after the gasoline release, or the resident reported gasoline-related odors. The air monitoring tests of these homes demonstrated that the Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) were at safe levels.

Based on these results and after consultation with MDHHS, the WCLHD concludes that it is safe for the residents in Zone 2 investigative area to return to their homes.

Sewer and Home Indoor Testing Validation

Residents may wonder why we are not testing 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.



Public Health

Area between Zone 1 and Zone 2

There have been questions about the area between Zone 1 and Zone 2. The houses and schools north of Woodruff Road between Zone 1 and Zone 2 have sewer lines that are connected to a lateral sewer line on Meadows Drive and then to another lateral line in Zone 2 near Tamarack Drive. The homes and schools in this area are not connected to the sewer main running along Woodruff Road. For this reason, the vapors from the main sewer line were not expected to move into this area, which is why this area was not included in the recommended evacuation (Zone 1) or investigation (Zone 2) areas.

Even though vapors from the main sewer line were not expected to travel to the area between Zone 1 and Zone 2, out of an abundance of caution, the federal, state, and local partners involved in the response to the gasoline release did sample the air in the sewer lines in this area. This sampling included the sewers serving houses along Ailanthus Drive, Alders Street, Laurel Drive, Palmetto Drive, and Meadows Drive. MDHHS reviewed data from this sewer testing and confirmed that all samples in the neighborhood between Zone 1 and Zone 2 were well below levels that could cause an indoor air hazard.

Zone 1

The sewer gas process used for clearing Zone 2 is being applied to Zone 1 as well. MDHHS has been reviewing the sewer gas data as it is received. Work is ongoing to test homes in Zone 1. Some individual residents may be notified on their clearance before the entire zone is cleared; other individual residents might be cleared after the entire zone is cleared.

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 2. 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 if you have other questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

Carol Austerberry
Health Officer, Director
Wayne County Local Health Department

Enclosure