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Health Department of Northwest Michigan Resuming Some Environmental Health Services

On May 1, 2020 the Governor signed Executive Order 2020-70, lifting previous restrictions and allowing work to resume on May 7 for residential and commercial construction, as well as other work traditionally performed outdoors. As a result, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is able to resume some environmental health permitting and evaluation services.

Under the Stay Home, Stay Safe Executive Order, the health department was restricted to providing critical services which were necessary to protect or prolong life. In compliance with these orders, our environmental health division has been conducting only emergency land use services, while also prioritizing our COVID-19 response. Scott Kendzierski, Health Department of Northwest Michigan Environmental Health Director shared, “several weeks ago, many of our services were scaled back to minimize the risks to our staff and the community. Our mission, as a public health agency, shifted to focus our efforts to stopping the transmission of this deadly disease.”

During the COVID-19 response, the environmental health division reduced its land use programs to addressing failed water and wastewater systems, complaint investigations due to imminent public health threats, and communicable disease response and services necessary to support critical infrastructure workers. Throughout the COVID-19 response, land use sanitarians assumed roles in the areas of both logistics and enforcement throughout the emergency response supporting operations through activities such as facilitating the opening of local drive-through testing facilities and lab operations, local distribution of Personal Protective Equipment, as well as providing education and support for compliance with state and local orders.

Executive Order 2020-70 allows construction to resume, we intend to support the work of this industry with the necessary precautions to ensure the health and safety of our employees as well as the construction sector and the public. The physical health department windows will remain closed to the public and all services will require heightened safety measures, including: online application submission, scheduled appointments, client screening, adherence to social distancing practices, and routine use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).

“Things will look significantly different than they did before COVID-19,” Scott Kendzierski, Environmental Health Director said. “These challenges may result in delayed services, however, we ask for the public’s patience as we strive to protect everyone involved through the implementation of these new processes.”

In order to receive quick service, applicants are asked to submit a complete application. This includes all required fields filled out, a clear description of the project being applied for, and a detailed site plan. This will allow for the least amount of delays in processing the application and service completion.

Information regarding available services, applications, fee schedules and downloadable versions of the sanitary code can be found [on our website](#).

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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