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Gov. Rick Snyder creates action team to enhance coordination in statewide response to nationally emerging contaminant

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LANSING, Mich. – Michigan and a growing list of states are dealing with a nationally emerging contaminant. To escalate Michigan’s response, Gov. Rick Snyder today signed **Executive Directive 2017-4**, which establishes the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART). The directive is designed to ensure a comprehensive, cohesive and timely response to the continued mitigation of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) across Michigan.

The team is tasked with enhancing cooperation and coordination among local, state and federal agencies charged with identifying, communicating and addressing the potential effects of PFAS in Michigan and protecting public health. The team will be led by retired Michigan Chief Deputy Attorney General Carol Isaacs, who has been authorized by the governor to ensure timely action is taken on all environmental, public health and public information fronts.

For more than 50 years, PFAS chemicals have been widely used in industrial applications and on military bases. The science surrounding potential public health effects is still evolving, but the use of these chemicals is declining and research on how to deal with the contaminants is developing. PFAS chemicals have been identified in locations internationally. In Michigan, there are sites across the state where products that used PFAS were disposed of improperly or used for applications that were not known at the time to be a public health risk. For example, PFAS were commonly used in firefighting foams, cleaning products, household cookware and carpets, and food packaging including some fast food wrappers and some microwave popcorn bags.

Rapid response teams comprised of state and local agencies have been investigating these sites for potential contamination and taking actions to protect public health. These response teams are key to protecting the regions of the state possibly affected

by PFAS contaminants. The organizations involved also will be coordinating efforts to ensure the public is being kept informed with up-to-date information as it becomes available.

The governor also has spoken with national military leaders about the federal response to contaminants discovered on bases and adjacent communities.

“To safeguard Michiganders from this emerging contaminant, it’s critical that responding agencies at all levels are effectively communicating and coordinating efforts,” Snyder said. “This team will be instrumental in establishing protocols and best practices that will allow all partners to comprehensively address these contaminants across Michigan.”

In addition to Isaacs, the team includes representatives from the Michigan Departments of Environmental Quality; Health and Human Services; Military and Veterans Affairs; and Agriculture and Rural Development. The team will receive additional support from the Michigan Departments of State Police; Natural Resources; Technology, Management and Budget; Treasury; Licensing and Regulatory Affairs; and Education. It also will coordinate with the National Guard Bureau, U.S. Department of Defense, and the appropriate local health departments and government agencies on PFAS contaminant issues.

Isaacs has extensive experience within state government and previously served in both Michigan’s legislative and executive branches. She was a senior critical care nurse and manager for many years, and served on numerous hospital committees. Isaacs received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Attorneys General in 2016.

Dr. David Savitz of Brown University’s School of Public Health will serve as the team’s academic consultant. Savitz is a professor of epidemiology and has served in several positions within academic and professional societies, boards and committees. He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including his most recent in 2011 – the National Cancer Institute’s Distinguished Lecturer Award in Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology.

“Both Carol and David have a wealth of experience that will serve them well in leading this team and ensuring a timely and effective response to this rapidly evolving public health issue,” Snyder said.

The state has created a website where the public can find out information about PFAS contamination and the coordinated efforts currently underway to address it in Michigan. The site will be continually updated as additional information becomes available. The website address is <http://michigan.gov/pfasresponse>.

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