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**Community Health Agency Kicks off
'Safe Homes = Safe Families' Month in June**

Coldwater, Michigan, June 4, 2009 – As you kick off your summer activities this month, adding a home safety inventory of quick, easy and inexpensive tests could help you prevent silent killers like radon and lead from harming you and your family members.

“Conducting some simple tests at home and taking simple steps to address any problems you may find can prevent disease or perhaps prevent other serious health problems”, said Mary Proctor, Community Outreach Worker.

Mary Proctor recommends a home inventory that includes:

- Annual water testing, especially if you use a private well for drinking water. City water systems are continually monitored for water safety but it is up to homeowners to monitor their private wells for pollutants like bacteria and nitrates. A bacterial analysis can detect bacteria, including E. coli, an indicator of potential contamination with other serious pathogens.
- Disaster Preparedness planning – Make sure you have a plan for your family in the event of a disaster. Tornados, fires and other unexpected events can often bring panic. Having a plan for what to do in case of an event can help the family (especially the kids) keep their cool knowing everybody knows what to do. Make a plan today and make sure everybody knows what their role is should something happen.
- Lead testing paint from your home, if it was built before 1978, when many house paints included lead. Lead poisoning is usually caused by months or years of exposure to small amounts of lead in the home, work, or day care environment. Lead poisoning does not always produce symptoms, but it can be easily detected by a simple finger-stick blood test.

Children, older adults, and individuals with a chronic illness are particularly susceptible to environmental hazards, said Mary Proctor. “But they are easy to identify and relatively easy to address. And Health Department staff can provide consultation for people who find an environmental health problem in their home - we’re always working to protect the public against threats to their health”.

The Community Health Agency of Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph County are committed to promoting wellness, preventing disease, providing health care, and protecting the environment. For additional information about our services, visit our website www.bhsj.org.

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