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28 are infected at pool party

By Don Reid, Staff Writer

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Coldwater, Mich. — Local health officials want to get with area pool companies, following the July outbreak of cryptosporidium. Twenty-eight people were infected at a private pool party in Hillsdale County.

Rebecca Burns, environmental health protection direction for the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency (CHA), said the problem resulted from improper operation of a system that uses salts to create chlorine to disinfect the pool.

Burns said the owner was not running the system enough for the heavy load of people at the three-day party, "so the residual chlorine was not there." She suggested owners either are not instructed on proper use, including how to keep chlorine levels safe, so her department wants to work with pool companies.

"You know how kids are in pools ... there were a lot of organics going into that pool," Burns said, adding that about one-half the people at the party got the disease.

CHA Prevention Services Director JoAnn Wilczynski said after officials checked with those infected, "the only commonality was the ingestion of pool water."

The parasite can only be confirmed by testing of stool samples. The disease is caused by microscopic parasites, called Cryptosporidium, or "crypto," which can live in the intestine of humans and animals. CHA officials regulate only commercial pools and do not check private pools. Its staff came in to look at the pool only because of the crypto outbreak.

Last June, one firefighter was hospitalized and 19 others suffered from diarrhea after a calf barn fire in Quincy Township. That also was caused by cryptosporidium.

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