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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Blastomycosis Outbreak Investigation Update

Public Health Delta & Menominee Counties (PHDM) continues to investigate an outbreak of blastomycosis associated with the Escanaba Billerud Paper Mill. To date, there have been 19 confirmed cases of blastomycosis, a fungal infection, identified. A confirmed case is a person with symptoms of blastomycosis and where the fungus has either been grown (culture) or seen by microscope in a test specimen. In addition to the 19 confirmed cases, 74 people have been classified as probable cases. A probable case is a person with symptoms of blastomycosis and who has a positive antigen or antibody test.

Blastomycosis is a disease associated with a fungus that grows in moist soil and decomposing matter such as wood and leaves. People can get blastomycosis infection by breathing in fungal spores from the air. Blastomycosis does not spread from person to person or between animals and people.

Those who do get sick can develop symptoms such as cough (sometimes with blood), fever, chest pain, difficulty breathing, night sweats, fatigue, weight loss, muscle aches, and joint pain. Any persons experiencing these symptoms should contact their healthcare provider and discuss whether testing for blastomycosis is recommended.

“The health and safety of our Escanaba employees is our first priority,” said Brian Peterson, Operations Vice President, Billerud Escanaba Mill. “We greatly appreciate the guidance of PHDM, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and other partners as we continue the investigation. Although the source of the infection has not been established, we continue to take this matter very seriously and are following recommendations from health and government officials and implementing numerous, proactive steps to protect the health and safety of our employees, contractors and visitors.”

PHDM and Billerud will continue to provide updates about cases at the Escanaba Mill and the community at large.

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