

PFAS in Drinking Water

Background: Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large family of man-made chemicals that contain carbon, fluorine, and other elements. These chemicals have been in use since the 1940s and are found in a variety of products including firefighting foams, household products such as non-stick cookware, food packaging, and stain and water repellants.

The two most widely studied PFAS chemicals are perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS); these chemicals were voluntarily phased out of production in the United States. However, as many as 3,000 other PFAS chemicals still are used in a wide variety of applications. These chemicals are persistent and resist degradation, meaning they accumulate in the environment and your body over time.

The Issue: People can be exposed to PFAS in a variety of ways, including eating food or drinking water contaminated with PFAS, exposure through working conditions at PFAS production facilities, and by the release during normal use of household products containing PFAS. Research has shown potential health impacts of PFOA/PFOS exposure include low infant birth weight, decreased fertility, elevated cholesterol, abnormal thyroid hormone levels, liver inflammation, weakening of the immune system, and testicular and kidney cancer. Scientists are researching to better understand the health impacts of other PFAS chemicals.

Regulatory Update: On June 15, the Environmental Protection Agency announced updated Health Advisories (HA) for four PFAS chemicals. This includes:

- Interim HA for PFOA = 0.004 parts per trillion (ppt)
 - Minimum Reporting Level for PFOA = 4 ppt
- Interim HA for PFOS = 0.02 ppt
 - Minimum Reporting Level for PFOs = 4 ppt
- Final HA for GenX Chemicals = 10 ppt
 - Minimum Reporting Level for GenX Chemicals = 5 ppt
- Final HA for PFBS = 2,000 ppt
 - Minimum Reporting Level for PFBS = 3 ppt

This is a significant change from the EPA's previous HA from 2016 which called for no more than 70 ppt for the combined concentrations of PFOA and PFOS.

Looking Ahead: The EPA is expected to propose enforceable National Primary Drinking Water Regulations under the Safe Drinking Water Act for PFOA & PFOS in the Fall of 2022, with the final rulemaking expected by the end of 2023. The proposal will consist of both a non-enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level Goal and an enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level or Treatment Technique. Additionally, EPA's fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 5) requires monitoring for 29 PFAS between 2023 and 2025. Consistent with EPA's PFAS Strategic Roadmap, UCMR 5 will support new data that are critically needed to improve EPA's understanding of the frequency that these PFAS are found in the nation's drinking water systems and at what levels.



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WQA Activities: WQA has continued to weigh in on the agency's actions to research and regulate drinking water health contaminants such as PFAS. Communications have emphasized that Point-of-Use (POU) and Point-of-Entry (POE) water treatment systems can assist with the reduction of PFAS from drinking water. These final barrier technologies are already being utilized by many individuals, households, and businesses to improve their drinking water quality and it is vital for the agency to understand the practicality of these water treatment systems that are ready to be deployed immediately in response to this public health concern. The EPA should also encourage the use of certified products in order to help ensure these systems function as intended and are considered as part of the solution when developing EPA rulemakings for PFAS.

WQA has made the following recommendations:

1. Encouraged the EPA Science Advisory Board to meet with stakeholders to understand the feasibility of currently available POU/POE technologies in remediating PFAS in drinking water.
2. Urged the agency to deliberate amongst stakeholders in the water treatment industry and specifically work in conjunction with the NSF International Joint Committee on Drinking Water Treatment Units (DWTU) Task Group on PFAS.

In reference to the agency's actions on the Draft Fifth Contaminant Candidate List (CCL 5), WQA endorsed the EPA in its efforts to build a comprehensive understanding of health contaminants and the relationship to drinking water. The association echoed earlier comments on final barrier technologies. Many of the 66 chemicals referenced in the CCL 5 including Bisphenol A, Manganese, Methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE), and PFAS can and are currently remediated by certified POU and POE water treatment systems.

Additional Information: The Biden Administration and EPA announced \$1 billion – the first of \$5 billion – to [support communities in addressing PFAS](#). The funding for states and territories through the Emerging Contaminants (EC) in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Grant (SDC) program was allocated under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law ([Public Law 117-58](#)). Eligible uses of this grant program include testing and remediating emerging contaminants, including the use of water filtration systems. This complements the [\\$3.4 billion in funding](#) that is going through the Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) and the \$3.2 billion allotted through the Clean Water SRFs that can also be used to address PFAS in water this year. EPA will be issuing guidance later this year outlining eligible uses and providing more information on applying for this funding.



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