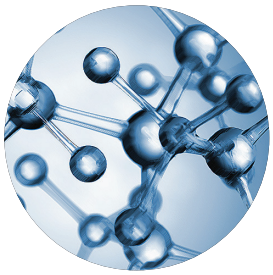
HOW TO TALK WITH HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS ABOUT **PFAS**

PFAS in drinking water can be a complex and confusing topic. As more news stories and studies bring the issue to the attention of consumers, water treatment dealers need to be prepared to discuss PFAS. This guide is intended to help dealers answer customers' questions.

CUSTOMER: WHAT ARE PFAS?



DEALER: PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are man-made chemicals used to make thousands of consumer items, like non-stick cookware, stain repellants and firefighting foam. They're called "forever chemicals" because nothing in nature will destroy them once they enter the environment.

Additional Information: *The two most extensively studied PFAS chemicals, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), were voluntarily phased out of production in the U.S. by 2015. However, there are an estimated 9,000 types of these chemicals in use worldwide. Most of the industry has shifted to shorter chain PFAS, and less is known about the risks of these molecules. One thing we do know about PFAS is that they bioaccumulate. This means that our bodies are not good at breaking these chemicals down or flushing them out. Instead, we continue to accumulate more PFAS each time we are exposed to them.*

CUSTOMER: ARE PFAS DANGEROUS?

DEALER: Current scientific research suggests that exposure to certain PFAS chemicals could impact your health, although research is still ongoing on the type of PFAS and the level of exposure that would lead to those impacts. According to the EPA, health effects could include reproductive effects in women, developmental effects on children, an increase in the risk of some cancers, detrimental effects on the immune system, interference with the body's natural hormones, and increased cholesterol levels and/or risk of obesity. Other potential health impacts are still being studied.

Additional Information: *The EPA also offers an excellent consumer friendly resource on PFAS and health that you can use to substantiate the message above.*

https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas

If the customer asks specific questions regarding PFAS and their health, you should refer them to their family physician.

CUSTOMER: DO YOU THINK PFAS ARE IN MY DRINKING WATER?

DEALER: The only way to know for sure is to have your water tested for PFAS. Some of the known hotspots for PFAS contamination are industrial areas where items containing PFAS are made, landfills, airports, military bases and farmland where biosolids are recycled for fertilizer. However, since these chemicals do not break down in the environment, they travel very long distances from the source once they enter surface water or groundwater. If you would like to test your water, I can help you collect a sample and have it analyzed at a laboratory.

Additional Information: *Various sources can be consulted to obtain general information about PFAS contamination in a given state. For example, public water systems may be conducting testing as part of the EPA UCMR 5 initiative. Some of the state agencies that have primacy over drinking water have funded broader testing. This data relevant to public water supplies is collated on the WQRF Contaminant Map. State and county agencies that have jurisdiction over private wells are a good source of information on PFAS contamination in local groundwater.*

Be cautious about drawing any conclusions based on maps showing known PFAS contamination sites. Oftentimes you will find that the states that do not appear to have many known PFAS contamination sites are also the states that have not yet funded comprehensive sampling programs. The only way to know whether a customer has PFAS in their water is to test their water.

The EPA maintains a list of certified laboratories on their website, which can be helpful for identifying labs to conduct PFAS testing.

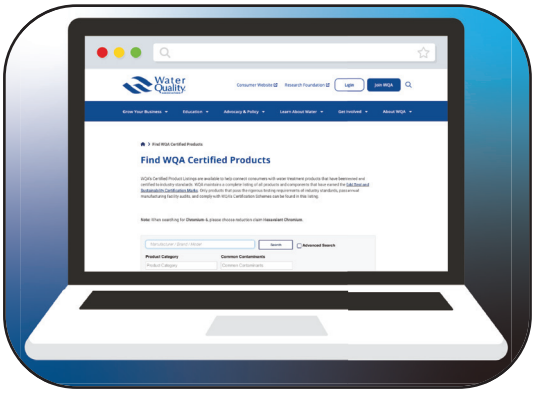
CUSTOMER: I'M ON A MUNICIPAL WATER SUPPLY, WITH WATER TREATED BY THE CITY. WHY WOULD THERE BE PFAS IN MY WATER?

DEALER: Although some states are already monitoring for PFAS, the U.S. set its first-ever national drinking water standards for six PFAS chemicals in April 2024, and public water systems have until 2027 to start monitoring and publicly reporting the levels of these chemicals. It's possible your water system is not yet testing for PFAS.

Additional Information: *The EPA's National Primary Drinking Water Regulation for six PFAS chemicals is available at the EPA website.*

The EPA suggests that certified water filters could be an effective way to reduce PFAS levels in your home. An EPA fact sheet explains what filtration technology is effective, how to choose filtration products and how to maintain filters.

CUSTOMER: CAN YOU TREAT MY WATER FOR PFAS?



DEALER: There are water treatment systems that are capable of reducing the amount of PFAS in your drinking water. The products we offer are….(describe your company's product offerings for PFAS removal, relevant product certifications and/or test data on performance).

Additional Information: *Mainstream Point of use (POU) and Point of entry (POE) water treatment technologies that can reduce PFAS from drinking water include activated carbon filtration, reverse osmosis (RO), and anion exchange treatment. There are multiple research and development efforts focused on PFAS treatment in drinking water. Dealers should attend the annual WQA Convention & Exhibition to find out about emerging technologies designed to remove PFAS.*

POU treatment is adequate since ingestion is the primary route of exposure, but in some applications, it may be more desirable or practical to use a POE solution.

Dealers are encouraged to look for products certified to American National Standards NSF/ANSI 53 or NSF/ANSI 58 for PFAS reduction. Alternatively, ask the manufacturers for test data on PFAS reduction that can be shared with your customers. It is not safe to assume that all carbon, all RO systems, or all anion exchange systems will adequately remove PFAS. When in doubt use post-treatment testing to validate adequate removal.

CUSTOMER: WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON PFAS?

DEALER: Here is a fact sheet developed by the Water Quality Association (WQA). WQA is a trade association dedicated to the betterment of water quality for the residential, commercial, and industrial water treatment industry.

Additional Information: *A consumer fact sheet is part of WQA's PFAS portal, which offers dealers resources on PFAS. WQA's professional certification and education program offers additional training or resources on PFAS. For any further questions, email wqa@wqa.org.*

Water Quality® ASSOCIATION