



PFAS/PFOS/PFOA

FACT SHEET

DATE: June 23, 2022

BACKGROUND

Recent national news about a group of synthetic chemicals known as PFAS may have customers concerned about the safety of their drinking water.

PFAS stands for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances. Two of these chemicals, PFOA and PFOS, have been used to make carpets, clothing, food packaging, non-stick cookware, and other materials; they are also found in firefighting foams.

For most people, consumer products and food are the main sources of exposure to these chemicals; however, drinking water can be an additional source in communities where these chemicals have contaminated the water supplies. Such contamination is typically localized and associated with a specific facility, for example, an industrial plant where these chemicals were produced or an airfield at which they were used for firefighting and have entered the water supply.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Health Advisories are not enforceable like regulations. Instead, the advisories are interim guidance issued by the USEPA before they develop a formal regulation. At this time, there is no regulatory limit on the concentration of PFAS chemicals in drinking water. USEPA has updated a previously established "health advisory" and is in the process of developing regulations. The health advisory level is now set to 0.004 ppt (parts per trillion or nanograms/liter) for PFOA, 0.02 ppt for PFOS. For perspective, 1 ppt or nanograms/liter is equal to 1 teaspoon (5 mL) in 2,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools (2.5 million liters each). USEPA has also added PFBS (2,000 ppt) and GenX (10 ppt) to the new health advisory. (See chart below for comparisons.)

Waterworks has been monitoring for these emerging contaminants for over three years, and the results for the majority of source waters were below the detection limit using currently available testing methods. In some cases, the advisory is set lower than current analytical methods can detect.

Waterworks will continue to monitor the sources where the presence of these contaminants were confirmed and will adopt management and treatment strategies that ensure full compliance with future PFAS regulatory requirements. We are also working with a State Incident Response team to address the likely source(s) of these compounds. In addition to PFOA and PFOS, we have also monitored for PFBS and Gen-X in the finished water and source waters; these latter two contaminants have been well below the recent USEPA health advisories.

As noted in USEPA's June 13, 2022 announcement, guidance on these emerging contaminants continues to evolve. The interim Health Advisory Levels (HALs) for these contaminants are substantially lower than reliable detection abilities of scientific instruments and methods. Because of this, the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) (a national nonprofit, nonpartisan association of state and territorial

environmental agency leaders) and American Water Works Association (AWWA) have expressed significant concern over the new interim health advisories through letters and public statements. Below is a summary of NNWW PFAS monitoring results compared to the previous and new HAL.

PFAS Compound	2016 EPA Health Advisory Level	2022 EPA Health Advisory Level	Newport News Waterworks Average	UCMR5 ¹ Regulatory MRL ²
PFOA	70 ppt combined	0.004 ppt	1.8 ppt	4 ppt
PFOS		0.02 ppt	4.2 ppt	4 ppt
PFBS	N/A	2,000 ppt	<2.0 ppt	3 ppt
GenX	N/A	10 ppt	<5.0 ppt	5 ppt

¹UCMR5 stands for The Fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule, which requires EPA to issue a list of priority unregulated contaminants to be monitored by certain public water systems across States, Tribes, and Territories.

²MRL stands for Minimum Reporting Levels and represents the level at which the contaminant can be detected with technology currently available.

WHAT IS NEWPORT NEWS WATERWORKS DOING ABOUT PFAS?

We recognize the average level of PFOA and PFOS in our treated water is above the USEPA’s new health advisory levels. That is why continued research is our priority. Our staff is committed to learning more about:

Determining the levels of PFAS in our water with additional monitoring and identifying any patterns

Understanding established and emerging treatment options

Developing practical and feasible strategies to reduce levels of PFAS as USEPA develops and finalizes its future drinking water standards.

Continuing to participate in statewide screenings and assessment programs being conducted by Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Customers can be assured their water meets all current federal and state standards. We are committed to protecting public health and will continue to monitor this issue closely to stay ahead of potential risks.

PLEASE NOTE

Waterworks is committed to providing safe drinking water to the communities we serve.

- The results of our continual testing show that our water meets or surpasses state and federal standards for safe drinking water.
- We regularly share the results of our water quality testing with the public. You can view our annual water quality report at nnva.gov/waterqualityreport

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