

The Problem with PFAS

The Problem

- PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), otherwise known as “Forever Chemicals,” are synthetic chemicals that can resist heat, grease, and water. They have been used in consumer and industrial products such as water-resistant fabrics, cleaning products, and nonstick cookware since the 1950s. Despite the known risk to human health and the environment, little has been done to address the problem.
- PFAS are extremely soluble and mobile in soils and water and can enter the human body through multiple pathways (drinking water, eating fish, etc.). Most people now have PFAS in their blood.
- Ingesting PFAS has been linked to reproductive issues, developmental delays in children and infants, increased risk of cancers, and other health effects. ([EPA](#), [DNR](#))
- Firefighters face an increased risk of PFAS exposure through the use of AFFF (aqueous film forming foam), an agent used to extinguish fires. The consequences of the long term and repeated exposure to PFAS from these sources is a health concern for firefighters and has not been sufficiently studied.
- PFAS are commonly found in the soil and groundwater near airports and military bases because AFFF has commonly been used at these sites for training purposes.
- Several legislative loopholes have been leveraged by chemical manufacturers to allow the continued production and use of these chemicals.
- 3M, headquartered in Maplewood, Minnesota, is a major producer of consumer and industrial products containing PFAS. It has long known about the adverse health effects of these chemicals, and how it has done little to remediate this growing problem. In December 2022, 3M announced it would stop producing PFAS chemicals by the end of 2025.
- Drinking water tests across public water supplied in Iowa found PFAS in 41 percent of samples. Only 12 percent of samples were above the Health Advisory set by EPA.
- DNR found PFAS in more than 90 percent of lakes and rivers, as well as 32 percent of groundwater used for public water supplies.

Federal Actions

- On March 29, 2023, EPA proposed a rule to set an enforceable drinking water standard (Maximum Contaminant Level) for PFOA and PFOS, as well as a cumulative hazard index for four other chemicals.
- On April 10, 2024, EPA announced the final National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) for six PFAS: PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS, PFNA, and HFPO-DA as contaminants with individual MCLs, and PFAS mixtures containing at least two or more of PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA, and PFBS using a Hazard Index MCL to account for the combined and co-occurring levels of these PFAS in drinking water.



2024 PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation

Substance	Final MCLG	Final MCL (enforceable levels)
PFOA	Zero	4.0 parts per trillion (ppt) (also expressed as ng/L)
PFOS	Zero	4.0 ppt
PFHxS	10 ppt	10 ppt
PFNA	10 ppt	10 ppt
HFPO-DA (commonly known as GenX Chemicals)	10 ppt	10 ppt
Mixtures containing two or more of PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA, and PFBS	1 (unitless)Hazard Index	1 (unitless)Hazard Index

Iowa Actions

- Iowa DNR released a high-level [PFAS Action Plan](#) in 2020 focused on identifying sources of PFAS, increasing monitoring efforts, promoting pollution prevention, and education.
- In 2023, Iowa DNR has the identified water supplies most likely to be susceptible to PFAS contamination and made testing results [available online](#). These results showed [detectable levels of PFAS in 12](#) of the 70 tested community water supplies.

Iowans Deserve a Strong Response to PFAS Contamination

- Not having information about what products contain PFAS risks public health, particularly for sensitive populations like mothers, pregnant women, infants, and small children. Disclosing when a product contains PFAS allows consumers to purchase safer alternatives.
- Regulating the manufacture, use, and disposal of these forever chemicals requires immediate legislative action to protect all Iowans and the health of the environment.
- Communities near landfills, airports, and chemical manufacturing facilities face greater risk of PFAS contamination.
- Firefighters deserve protections against PFAS in AFFF that can be harmful to their health
- 3M has [agreed to pay](#) for new drinking water wells for the town of Camanche, Iowa, along with private water treatment systems, because a 3M facility in Illinois was identified as a likely source of PFAS contamination.

For More Information:

- [General Fact Sheet: EPA's Final Rule to Limit PFAS in Drinking Water](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions & Answers: Final PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Small and Rural Water Systems](#)
- [What Firefighters Need to Know about PFAS and AFFF](#)
- History and Use of PFAS in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)

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