

New Environmental Protection Agency Advisories for PFAS Chemicals June 15, 2022

What do the new EPA advisories mean?

The EPA has just released four new advisories for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water, updating the levels of these chemicals at or below which adverse health effects are not expected to occur. The new advisories are issued for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), GenX chemicals, and perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS) in drinking water. Exposure to these chemicals can cause a number of health effects.

The EPA's new advisories for PFAS levels are much lower than the agency's prior guidance. The previous EPA advisory for the sum of PFOA and PFOS in drinking water was 70 parts per trillion (ppt). Vermont's current regulations are more stringent, at 20 ppt for the combination of five different PFAS, including PFOA and PFOS.

However, the new EPA advisories for PFOA and PFOS are 0.004 and 0.02 ppt, which are below Vermont's current regulations. Based on testing data currently available to ANR, PFBS and GenX have not been found in Vermont public drinking water supplies above the new EPA advisories of 2,000 and 10 ppt, but ANR is continuing to investigate and test the presence of these chemicals in public drinking water supplies.

It's important to understand that the new advisories are not regulatory standards but technical information on health effects from these contaminants. The EPA is expecting to finalize regulations for PFOA and PFOS in late 2023.

What is Vermont already doing to manage PFAS?

The EPA and ANR agree that the lower a water system's PFAS levels are, the lower the risk to consumers. Along with the other New England States, Vermont has been and will continue to be a national leader in protecting the public from harmful exposures to PFAS. The updated EPA advisories reinforce ANR's existing public health effort to comprehensively address PFAS contamination in public drinking water supplies in Vermont.



Beginning in 2019 Vermont began requiring testing for PFAS in:

- Community water systems (e.g. cities, towns, homeowners associations),
- Non-transient non-community water systems (e.g. schools and childcare facilities not part of a community water system)
- Bottled water suppliers

Because of this extensive testing, we know which communities are most impacted by PFOA, PFOS and the other 16 PFAS measured in Vermont drinking water.

Vermont has established a legally enforceable standard, known as a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for a combined five PFAS (including PFOA and PFOS) of 20 parts per trillion. Any public water system exceeding these levels is required to issue a do not drink notice and take steps to reduce or eliminate PFAS levels in the water supply. Both the testing and remediation work in Vermont is ongoing.

What are Vermont's next steps for PFAS management?

In the coming weeks, ANR expects to learn more from the EPA about these new advisories and will consider new information as it becomes available. The Agency is working with the EPA and our partners in the Vermont Department of Health to understand whether these updated advisories should modify Vermont's current approach to the management of PFAS contaminants. Currently, Vermont's existing regulatory standards remain in place.

In the near term, ANR will be working with public water systems with detectable levels of PFOA and/or PFOS to notify customers on these systems. That notification will include advice on what steps customers can take to protect their health.

- There are also quick actions that some water systems can take to reduce PFAS in the water that is provided to customers. For example, water systems that have two sources can blend to reduce PFAS. ANR will be working with water systems to evaluate immediate available options to reduce levels of PFAS in water to as low as possible.
- Testing of private wells for PFAS is not currently required by the State of Vermont. The Health Department recommends that all private well owners test their drinking water for naturally occurring contaminants, including bacteria, arsenic, and other elements. When DEC identifies a site contaminated with PFAS, they test nearby wells. If you are outside of the sites identified by DEC and interested in testing your private well, you



can contact a lab approved for PFAS analysis. An approved lab list can be found on the Health Department [website](#).

In the longer term, ANR looks forward to working with the EPA to more tightly control the production and use of these chemicals.

If you are concerned about PFAS in your water right now, what should you do?

ANR tests bottled water for PFAS and has a list of bottled water sources with no detected PFAS as of 2021 testing. This can be a good short-term option for those concerned about their public water supply.

Additionally, water filters that meet NSF/ANSI certification 53 or 58 have been proven to reduce PFOA and PFOS concentrations in water to below the previous EPA health advisory of 70 ppt.

At this time, ANR does not have funding to help Vermonters with bottled water or filtration. In the coming days, ANR will work with public water systems with detectable levels of PFOA and/or PFOS that are below Vermont's MCL, and will require notification to customers on these systems. That notification will include further advice on steps customers can take to protect their health.

More information for the public is available at:

Agency of Natural Resources website: <https://dec.vermont.gov/pfas>

Agency of Natural Resources PFAS information line: 802 693 0206

