

Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division

Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) in Drinking Water

PFOA is a contaminant not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) for public drinking water systems, but it is something that has been on EPA's radar, with the potential of being regulated under the SDWA in the future. Under the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR), every five years the EPA issues a list of unregulated contaminants to be monitored by select public water systems. Sampling for these contaminants is required in order for the EPA to gather data on the occurrence of contaminants in drinking water that aren't presently being regulated in order to assess what may require regulation in the future. In 2012, the UCMR list 3 came out, which, among other things, included PFOA.

Starting in 2013, ten public drinking water systems throughout Vermont sampled for UCMR list 3 contaminants. None of these ten locations came back with results for PFOA above detection limits. As part of the UCMR process, labs across the country were certified to perform analysis using EPA methods. Unfortunately, no labs in Vermont are certified using the EPA method # 537 which is the method required to analyze for PFOA; you may find a list of laboratories qualified to analyze for PFOA here: <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/LabOutside1.5.pdf>.

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) suspects PFOA contamination to be limited to areas with particular manufacturing processes. These manufacturing processes include Teflon production facilities, producers of water/stain resistant fabrics, and producers of wire coatings. Wells within a 1.5-mile radius of the manufacturing facility in North Bennington were sampled by the Department as were select locations in Pownal based on their proximities to manufacturing facilities. The DEC is evaluating other areas within the state to assess whether additional sampling is necessary. As the UCMR list 3 sampling results indicate, this is not expected to be a state-wide problem affecting many water systems. At this time, it is understood to be very localized to areas nearby the manufacturing processes of interest. If you believe that a suspect manufacturing facility exists or existed in the area of your public water system, please notify the DEC.

Water systems are free to sample for PFOA if you are outside of the area of concern, should you elect to do so. If you perform testing for PFOA please report the lab results to the Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division immediately upon receipt. Public Community systems are required to report findings of unregulated contaminants in the 2016 Consumer Confidence Reports (which are issued to users in 2017).

For more information on PFOA, including contact information, access the DEC's website here: <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/PFOA.htm>