

NEWS | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | February 22, 2024

Department of Environmental Quality tests various sites for PFAS

BISMARCK, N.D. – Since 2018, the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality has been investigating Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) contamination from Aqueous Film Forming Foam at fire training sites and other locations across the state. Currently, none of the public water systems sampled in North Dakota have levels that would exceed EPA-proposed drinking water limits, and the department is not aware of any private wells testing positive for PFAS in the state. Facilities that have historically used certain firefighting foams may notify neighboring landowners and request access for additional testing.

PFAS, also called “forever chemicals” because they do not fully degrade in nature, are synthetic chemicals used in a wide range of products because of their ability to repel water, grease, and oil. PFAS is often present in certain foams used to extinguish fires involving flammable liquids, various building materials, carpet treatments, non-stick cookware, and other consumer products. According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), multiple types of PFAS compounds exist. Only a few U.S. laboratories can analyze PFAS compounds at this time, and knowledge of the health effects are evolving.

Exposure to high levels of these PFAS compounds may lead to adverse human health effects, including developmental effects on fetuses during pregnancy, immune system problems, changes to cholesterol levels, and cancer. What scientists understand about PFAS changes as new research provides additional information.

Environmental Quality continues to monitor our drinking water, surface water and groundwater for these compounds and is working with other state agencies and facility operators to determine the full pollutant impact. For more information on Environmental Quality’s ongoing efforts or about PFAS, go to <https://deq.nd.gov/MF/PFAS>.

For health-related questions, please reach out to your local healthcare provider or call the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Hotline at (866) 207-2880 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information contact:

Karl Rockeman
Water Quality Division
4201 Normandy St. | Bismarck, ND 58503 PHONE:
701.328.5225 | EMAIL: krockema@nd.gov
www.deq.nd.gov



Precautions with Class B Firefighting Foam (AFFF)



PFAS HAZARDS

A concern with using Class B AFFF is the potential for PFAS to impact water bodies. PFAS may enter groundwater through direct infiltration into the soil, impacting the water table or surface water through land runoff. PFAS in North Dakota can affect water bodies, including wetlands, lakes, rivers, reservoirs, and aquifers. PFAS could also impact drinking water sources and sensitive or endangered species habitats.

WHAT IS PFAS?

PFAS are called forever chemicals because their unique chemistry prevents them from breaking down under normal environmental conditions. The Environmental Protection Agency has classified these compounds as emerging contaminants. According to the EPA, there is no safe level of PFAS.

AFFF IS A SOURCE OF PFAS

Some PFAS contamination is attributed to AFFF use in firefighting emergencies and training exercises. Environmental Quality completed a statewide survey regarding potential PFAS contamination and found it present in shallow groundwater areas associated with the use of Class B AFFF.

Every time PFAS-containing Class B AFFF is released, there are environmental consequences.

- Restrict PFAS-containing AFFF use to fight actual flammable liquid fires when necessary.
- Do not use PFAS-containing AFFF in training exercises. Use alternative fire foams or simulations in any training application.

DISPOSAL CHALLENGES

There are limited ways to dispose of Class B AFFF. It cannot be flushed down the drain or sent to a landfill. Please refer to the *EPA Interim Guidance on the Destruction and Disposal of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances and Materials Containing Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances* for AFFF disposal instructions. This document is located online at <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/interim-guidancedestroying-and-disposing-certain-pfas-and-pfascontaining-materials-are-not>.

AFFF ALTERNATIVES

If your fire department or district has PFAS-containing AFFF, consider how and when the right time is to replace it with a less hazardous foam. Assess and understand specific hazards and application objectives.

- Ensure any potential replacement product is listed and approved for use on specific assets and hazards
- Verify the replacement product storage system and the application plan meet federal requirements.

Please contact the North Dakota State Fire Marshal at (701) 328-5550 with any questions about fire management or Environmental Quality at (701) 328-5150 regarding PFAS.