



Media Release

State Water Board Updates Guidelines for Testing and Reporting PFOA and PFOS As It Assesses Scope of Problem *Process Begun for Establishing Regulatory Standards*

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SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board today announced updated guidelines for local water agencies to follow in detecting and reporting the presence of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) in drinking water. The Board also announced it has begun the process of establishing regulatory standards for these chemicals.

The updated guidelines are part of the Board's comprehensive effort to assess the scope of contamination of drinking water supplies by PFOA and PFOS, chemicals that have been widely used in grease and stain-resistant coatings for consumer products and in firefighting foams. Because of their potential adverse health effects, these chemicals pose an emerging risk to drinking water sources nationwide.

The updated state guidelines lower the current notification levels from 14 parts per trillion (ppt) to 5.1 ppt for PFOA and from 13 ppt to 6.5 ppt for PFOS. The guidelines are based on updated health recommendations by the California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA).

Notification levels are a nonregulatory, precautionary health-based measure for concentrations in drinking water that warrant notification and further monitoring and assessment. Public water systems are encouraged to test their water for contaminants with notification levels, and in some circumstance may be ordered to test. If the systems do test, they are required to report exceedances to their governing boards and the State Water Board and are urged to report this information to customers.

In addition to the updated notification levels, the State Water Board announced today it has requested that OEHHA develop public health goals (PHGs) for both PFOA and PFOS, the next step in the process of establishing regulatory standards, known as maximum contaminant levels (MCLs), in drinking water. Other chemicals in the broader group of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) may be considered later, either individually or grouped, as data permits.





The State Water Board is currently conducting a statewide assessment to determine the scope of contamination by PFAS, including PFOA and PFOS, in water systems and groundwater. In the first phase, public water systems were ordered earlier this year to sample about 600 drinking water supply wells located near airports and landfills, where contamination is more likely, and near locations where PFAS was previously found. These chemicals have been used in fire-fighting foams at airports for fire training and response and have also been used in many consumer products that end up in landfills.

Following this initial phase, the assessment will likely focus on sampling water sources near industrial sites and at wastewater treatment facilities. Data collected from the assessment will be made publicly available on the State Water Board's website and used to inform future actions.

While the State Water Board continues to assess the scope of contamination based on initial data reporting from the statewide assessment, the response levels for PFOA and PFOS remain at 70 parts per trillion for the total combined concentration of both contaminants, consistent with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's health advisory level. The response levels will be updated in the fall.

Response levels are nonregulatory, precautionary health-based measures that are set higher than notification levels and represent a recommended level that water systems consider taking a water source out of service or provide treatment if that option is available to them.

[AB 756, signed by Governor Newsom on July 31](#), authorizes the State Water Board to more broadly order water systems to monitor for PFAS and report their detections. Additionally, drinking water sources with PFAS levels that exceed the response level are either to be taken out of service or the water system must provide public notice of the exceedance level. The law takes effect January 1, 2020.

Exposure to PFOA and PFOS can cause adverse health effects, including harmful effects to a developing fetus or infant, immune system and liver effects, and cancer. While consumer products are a large source of exposure to these chemicals for most people, drinking water has become an increasing concern due to the persistence and tendency of these chemicals to accumulate in groundwater.

For more information about PFOA and PFOS, the updated guidelines, and the work the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water is doing to assess the presence of these contaminants in drinking water, [please visit our resources page on these contaminants](#).

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