

PFAS NPDWR Topline Messages and Key Questions

Topline Messages

Safe drinking water is fundamental to healthy people and thriving communities.

- We rely on water from the moment we wake up and make a cup of coffee to when we brush our teeth at night. Every person should have access to clean and safe drinking water.
- That's why EPA is acting now to protect peoples' drinking water from contaminants, like PFAS.

The science is clear: long-term exposure to certain PFAS is linked to significant health risks.

- PFAS are a category of manufactured chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s. PFAS have characteristics that make them useful in a variety of products, including nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, and firefighting foam, as well as in certain manufacturing processes.
- People can be exposed to PFAS in several ways. When their drinking water is contaminated with PFAS, it can be a significant portion of a person's total PFAS exposure.
- Exposure to PFAS over a long time may lead to negative health effects on pregnant people and in developing babies, weaken a body's ability to fight disease, and an increased risk for some cancers, liver damage, and elevated cholesterol levels (which can increase the risk for heart attack or stroke).
- Reducing our exposure to PFAS can lower our risk for these negative health effects.

EPA is taking a key step to protect public health by proposing to establish legally enforceable levels for six PFAS known to occur in drinking water, fulfilling a foundational commitment in the Agency's PFAS Strategic Roadmap.

- As the lead federal agency responsible for ensuring safe drinking water for Americans, EPA is leveraging the most recent science and building on existing state efforts to limit PFAS to provide a nationwide, health-protective level for these specific PFAS in drinking water.
- The agency is proposing to **establish legally enforceable levels for six PFAS** known to occur in drinking water.
- The proposal, if finalized, will **regulate PFOA and PFOS as individual contaminants, and will regulate four other PFAS – PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and GenX Chemicals – as a mixture.**
- EPA is proposing to **set limits** for these chemicals.
 - Specifically, EPA is proposing to **regulate PFOA and PFOS at a level they can be reliably measured, which is 4 parts per trillion.**
 - EPA is also proposing that water systems monitor for four other PFAS known to occur in drinking water: PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and or GenX Chemicals. For these PFAS, water systems would use a hazard index calculation to determine if the **combined** levels of these PFAS pose a potential risk to human health.
- Readily available methods exist to test for and treat these six PFAS.
- The proposed regulation requires public water systems to **monitor** for these chemicals.
- The proposal requires systems to **notify** the public if levels of these PFAS exceed the proposed regulatory standards.
- The proposal requires public water systems to **reduce the levels of these PFAS** in drinking water if they exceed the proposed regulatory standards.
- If finalized, this new rule will result in significantly less PFAS in drinking water across the United States.

- Importantly, the regulatory limits EPA is proposing in this rule are achievable using a range of technologies and approaches available now.
- EPA understands that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and the rule allows water systems the flexibility to determine the best actions and approaches for their situation.
- For example, drinking water utilities can choose from among multiple options (such as granular activated carbon, reverse osmosis, or ion exchange systems) to determine the optimal treatment technology for their system to remove PFAS from drinking water. Some water systems may also be able to switch to water sources that are not contaminated by PFAS.

Reducing PFAS in drinking water will likely require investments in water infrastructure. There are billions of dollars available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help communities upgrade drinking water systems with technologies that remove PFAS.

- Thanks to President Biden’s leadership and bipartisan action in Congress, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides an unprecedented \$9 billion to invest in drinking water systems impacted by PFAS and other emerging contaminants.
- EPA will ensure that states, Tribes, and localities get their fair share of this federal water infrastructure investment—especially in disadvantaged communities. These funds include:
 - **\$4 billion** in investment through the **Drinking Water State Revolving Funds**, including a requirement that states dedicate 25 percent of these resources to disadvantaged communities or public water systems serving fewer than 25,000 people.
 - **\$5 billion** to communities as grants through EPA’s new **Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) Grant Program**. This program will promote access to safe and clean water in small, rural, and disadvantaged communities while supporting local economies. In February, EPA announced the availability of the first \$2 billion of this funding.

This rule complements actions that are being taken by states to protect drinking water sources from PFAS.

- EPA commends many states who have led the way in monitoring for and establishing guidelines or drinking water limits for some of these PFAS.
- Through this proposed rule, EPA is leveraging the most recent science and building on existing state regulations to provide a nationwide, health-protective level for these specific PFAS in drinking water.
- Communities and water systems should follow all applicable current state requirements. This proposed rule does not require water systems to take any action at this time.

This action is a cornerstone of EPA’s whole-of-agency approach outlined in the PFAS Strategic Roadmap.

- The Biden-Harris Administration is deeply committed to addressing PFAS contamination by advancing science and following the law.
- That is why EPA released its PFAS Strategic Roadmap in October 2021 and has taken actions to restrict PFAS from entering the water we drink, fish, and swim in; to hold polluters accountable, and accelerate research that will help EPA and other agencies take future actions.
- EPA will continue to work with federal, state, territorial, and Tribal governments and drinking water systems to address concerns about PFAS in drinking water and solutions to reduce human health risks.
- And EPA is committed to taking broader actions to help reduce Americans’ exposure to PFAS, including:
 - Monitoring thousands of drinking water systems across the country for dozens of PFAS, beginning this year;
 - Taking final action on a proposal to designate two PFAS as “hazardous substances” to help hold polluters accountable;
 - Restricting PFAS discharges to our waterways by strengthening Clean Water Act standards; and
 - Finalizing chemical data and safety rules that will increase our knowledge about PFAS, allow us to act faster and more strategically, and restrict legacy PFAS from reentering production.

Key Questions

What are PFAS?

- PFAS are a category of manufactured chemicals that can cause serious health problems if you are exposed to them over a long period of time.
- PFAS have been largely phased out due to health and environmental concerns. But there are thousands of PFAS chemicals, and they are still found in many products. PFAS tend to break down extremely slowly in the environment and can build up in people, animals, and the environment over time.

What is the new proposed rule?

- EPA is proposing to regulate six PFAS, including PFOA and PFOS as individual contaminants, and PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and GenX Chemicals as a mixture of contaminants.
- The proposed rule includes the proposed legally enforceable maximum levels of these six contaminants that can be found in drinking water, as well as information on drinking water treatment to reduce these PFAS and proposed monitoring requirements for public water systems to determine the level of these contaminants in their drinking water systems and notify the public if levels of these contaminants exceed the proposed regulatory standards.
- PFAS tend to co-occur with each other. This regulation will also remove many other PFAS when they co-occur with these six regulated PFAS.
- EPA anticipates that once fully implemented, the rule will reduce tens of thousands of PFAS-attributable illnesses or deaths.
- Today's action is not enforceable and is a proposal, but steps can be taken today to reduce exposure in drinking water.

Why is EPA taking this step now?

- EPA is following the process outlined in the Safe Drinking Water Act for regulating drinking water contaminants.
- Proposing to regulate PFAS in drinking water is a significant step toward protecting the health of hundreds of millions of people and is a cornerstone of EPA's strategy to protect people and the environment.

What does this mean for public drinking water systems?

- As part of the PFAS drinking water rule, technical information on health effects, analytical methods, and treatment technologies for removing PFAS will be available to drinking water system operators, as well as federal, state, Tribal, and local officials.
- This is a proposed rule for public comment; it does not require any actions for drinking water systems until EPA has a chance to consider public input. EPA anticipates finalizing the rule by the end of 2023.
- Once finalized, for those systems that find elevated concentrations of these PFAS above the regulatory limits, they will need to take action to reduce these PFAS in the drinking water they provide to their consumers. This may include installing additional treatment to remove these PFAS.

What does a proposed rule mean?

- EPA follows an important regulatory process, through which it develops a proposed regulation to protect public health based on the best available science and takes into consideration the economic and technical feasibility of implementation.
- Today's action is not a final rule. EPA is sharing the proposed rule with the public to provide an opportunity for all impacted stakeholders – from drinking water consumers to water systems to public health professionals – to share their feedback on it.
- You can share your input on the proposal by submitting a comment through the public docket, identified by Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2022-0114, at <https://www.regulations.gov>.

- If EPA finalizes this PFAS drinking water rule, it establishes an enforceable drinking water standard that is health protective, while taking cost and feasibility into account.

What is the impact of a rule?

- Over many years, this action will save thousands of lives and prevent tens of thousands of serious illnesses that would otherwise result from long-term exposure to PFAS. It will ultimately reduce certain types of cancers, liver disease, heart attacks and strokes, immune impacts, and developmental impacts to pregnant people and babies.

Who is going to pay for it?

- The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$9 billion specifically to invest in communities with drinking water impacted by PFAS and other emerging contaminants. EPA will ensure that states, Tribes, and localities get their fair share of this federal water infrastructure investment—especially disadvantaged communities.
- These funds will help communities make important investments in solutions to remove PFAS from drinking water and are a critical foundation on which to build to address this issue across the nation.
- States and communities can further leverage an additional nearly \$12 billion in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRF) dedicated to making drinking water safer, and billions more through funds that Congress provides annually to fund DWSRF loans.
- EPA understands that this funding alone will not meet all drinking water infrastructure needs to address PFAS. The Agency will continue to work with states, communities, and other partners to make long-term investments to make our nation’s drinking water safe from PFAS.

Can I drink my water?

- Drinking water may contain small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily mean that the water poses a health risk. Most known exposures are relatively low, but some can be high, particularly when people are exposed to a concentrated source over long periods of time.
- EPA’s Drinking Water Health Advisories for PFOA, PFOS, and other PFAS are non-enforceable, non-regulatory, health-based recommendations.
- If you are concerned about PFAS in your drinking water, EPA recommends you contact your local water utility to learn more about your drinking water. They may have monitoring data for PFAS or can provide any specific recommendations for your community. You may also consider installing in-home water treatment, such as filters, that are certified to lower the levels of PFAS in drinking water.
- Water utilities should learn about EPA’s Health Advisories and consider taking actions to monitor and address PFAS if found.
 - Learn more: <https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos>
- If you are concerned about the levels of PFAS in your drinking water you can take [Meaningful and Achievable Steps to Reduce Your Risk](#).