



Media Release

City of San Francisco wins award for efforts to reduce sources of ‘forever chemicals’

Scientists have found PFAS in air, soil and water

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SACRAMENTO – The [San Francisco Department of the Environment](#) has been named the winner of the 2022 Dr. Teng-Chung Wu [Pollution Prevention Award](#) for its work to reduce sources of [PFAS](#) (perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in the environment and set an example for others in the public and private sectors throughout California.

The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board presents this award annually in memory of Dr. Teng-Chung Wu, a former employee and early advocate for pollution prevention. He believed many pollutants could be more effectively eliminated by controlling their sources rather than relying on end-of-pipe treatment.

San Francisco’s efforts to tackle the impacts of PFAS are a reflection of Dr. Wu’s mindset. Often called “forever chemicals,” PFAS refers to a large group of human-made chemicals that are invisible, exceptionally difficult to destroy, and can be toxic to people and animals.

PFAS chemicals have been used widely in many industries since the 1940s and continue to be used in a variety of products, from non-stick cookware and fast-food packaging to waterproof garments and aerosol sprays. Scientists have found PFAS in air, water and soil around the world.

Since 2015, San Francisco has worked to reduce PFAS sources and limit human exposure. In 2018, it passed city-wide legislation banning PFAS in takeout food service ware and in 2020 it worked with the Biodegradable Products Institute to prohibit PFAS in certified compostable food service ware.

San Francisco also passed regulations prohibiting the city from purchasing carpet and furniture with PFAS-containing stain resistance treatments. Additionally, the department has collaborated with the city’s Fire Department and related agencies to stop using firefighting foam that contains PFAS.

“We are pleased to accept this award and hope that it not only shines a spotlight on these dangerous chemicals but inspires others to take the necessary steps to eliminate



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PFAS from their daily lives,” said Tyrone Jue, acting director of the Department of the Environment. “We look forward to our continued partnership with the regional water board to eliminate forever chemicals and make San Francisco and California a more sustainable place to live and work.”

The mission of the San Francisco Bay Water Board is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California’s water resources for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.