



# Media Release

## State Water Board Releases Guidelines for Testing and Reporting on PFOA and PFOS in Drinking Water *Division of Drinking Water Provides Guidance to Water Systems Statewide*

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**SACRAMENTO** – The State Water Resources Control Board today established new drinking water guidelines for local water agencies to follow in detecting and reporting the presence of contaminants once used in grease and stain-resistant coatings for consumer products and firefighting foams.

The guidelines adopted by the board's Division of Drinking Water (DDW) set interim Notification Levels of 14 parts per trillion (ppt) for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and 13 ppt for perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), chemicals that were widely used in consumer products until they were phased out in the 2000s due to health concerns. Exposure to PFOA and PFOS over certain levels is associated with adverse health effects that include cancer and developmental harm.

The new guidelines are based on the most health protective levels set by other states and follow a recommendation by the California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. The notification levels are being adopted on an interim basis while OEHHA conducts further analysis and develops a final recommendation later this year.

The notification guidelines do not require water agencies to test their water for these contaminants, although most California water systems serving more than 10,000 people already have. But if they do test and the level is exceeded, then water agencies are required to report the results to their governing boards and to the State Water Board. They are also urged to report this information to their customers.

The establishment of a notification level is often an initial step in the process of adopting a formal state regulatory standard, called a Maximum Contaminant Level. Data collected as a result of the new guidelines, reflecting the extent and levels of contamination, will inform DDW's decision about whether to adopt a regulatory standard for PFOA and PFOS.

As part of these guidelines, DDW is also establishing an interim Response Level of 70 ppt for the total combined concentration of PFOA and PFOS, consistent with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's health advisory level established in 2016. If this level is exceeded in



drinking water provided to consumers, DDW recommends that the water agency remove the water source from service.

In California 455 public water systems have tested for PFOA and PFOS. Of those, eight systems reported exceedances of the 70 ppt level for either PFOA, PFOS or both combined. These systems either have taken steps to treat their water to a level below the health advisory or have taken the water source out of service.

Part of a family of chemicals known as perfluoroalkyl substances, PFOA and PFOS were routinely used in grease-proof coatings for food packaging; stain-resistant coatings for carpets, clothing and furniture; and as an ingredient in coatings for not-stick cookware. In addition, these compounds have also been used in fire-retarding foams and various industrial processes.

While consumer products are a large source of exposure to these chemicals for most people, drinking water has become an increasing concern due to their persistence in the environment and tendency to accumulate in groundwater. Groundwater contamination is typically localized and associated with an industrial facility where these chemicals were manufactured or used in other products, or airfields which used the chemicals for firefighting.

For more information on the work the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water is doing in tracking voluntary monitoring and reporting by public water systems with these two compounds, please visit a resource page found [here](#).

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