

ACWWA Frequently Asked Questions about PFAS

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What is PFAS?

It is an abbreviation for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances which are manmade chemicals used in metal plating and a wide variety of consumer products including fire-suppressing foam, carpets, paints, polishes and waxes. The most studied types of PFAS are perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). Other monitored PFAS are for PFNA, PFHxS, and PFBS.

What is being done to protect our drinking water from PFAS?

ACWWA's drinking water is treated at blended reverse-osmosis purification plants at either the Joint Water Purification Plant (JWPP) or in partnership with Brighton's reverse-osmosis purification plant. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "high-pressure membranes, such as reverse-osmosis (RO), has proven extremely effective at removing PFAS, should any be introduced into the system." According to the American Water Works Association (AWWA), "membrane filtration (RO) is an excellent, broad spectrum way to remove PFAS." You can read the AWWA's PFAS article on our website.

What are the advisory levels of PFAS?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set a health advisory level for PFAS in drinking water not to exceed 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for the combined amount of PFOS and PFOA. That is the level, or amount, below which no harm is expected from these chemicals, based on daily consumption over a lifetime.

Has there been any detection of PFAS from the source-water being used by ACWWA?

- Recently seven PFAS testing samples were taken from ACWWA at source-water intakes from alluvial and groundwater wells (before the raw-water is treated). Of the seven tests taken, four samples had no detection, and three showed results of 10, 12, and 13 parts-per-trillion (PPT), which were well below the EPA's 70 PPT regulation. These were PFAS tests taken before water treatment.
- Of the three samples detecting PFAS at ACWWA's source-water intakes, two of them were from wells used for irrigation only, so no inclusion into ACWWA's drinking water supply. The other well test was from an alluvial well (a shallow well). This well either goes directly into a water storage tank before being used by any customer and is blended with other water sources, so any delivery of this water would be further diluted or it goes to our water purification (RO) plant which also mitigates any PFAS.

(*Sourced 03-01-2021.)

How does the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) regulate PFAS?

The CDPHE regulates PFAS based on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) advisories. The EPA established a health advisory level for two of the chemicals in the Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) family. A health advisory level is to safeguard people, especially sensitive groups, with a margin of protection. This advisory is for PFOA and PFOS combined at 70 parts per trillion.