

PFAS UPDATE – OCTOBER 2022

What is PFAS?

PFAS is the abbreviation for a group of manufactured chemicals called perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances. There are thousands of chemicals classified as PFAS. PFAS are often called “forever chemicals” because they are not easily destroyed and can stay in the environment for a long time.

What is PFOA and PFOS?

Two specific PFAS chemicals, PFOA and PFOS, have been measured in ACWWA’s drinking water at levels that exceed the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) interim lifetime health advisory levels (HAL) that were updated on June 15, 2022. PFOA is the abbreviation for perfluorooctanoic acid. PFOS is the abbreviation for perfluorooctanesulfonic acid.

What is a lifetime Health Advisory Limit?

The EPA publishes lifetime health advisory levels to identify concentrations to protect all people, including sensitive populations and those in different life stages, from adverse health effects resulting from exposure throughout their lives to PFAS in drinking water. The health advisory levels are calculated to offer a margin of protection against adverse health effects, considering other potential sources of exposure to PFAS beyond drinking water (for example, food, air, and consumer products), which provides an additional level of protection.

For PFOA the new HAL level is 0.004 parts per trillion (ppt) and for PFOS the new HAL level is 0.02 ppt. These new levels are dramatically lower than the 70 ppt total combined level that the EPA published in 2016.

What is a Maximum Contaminant Level?

Health advisory levels are different than enforceable Maximum Contaminant Levels that the EPA develops for drinking water systems. The EPA has indicated that they will publish a proposed National Drinking Water Regulation for PFOA and PFOS by the end of 2022. A final rule is expected by the end of 2023. The new rule will include a non-enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level Goal and an enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level or treatment technique.

What levels of PFOA and PFOS were measured in ACWWA's drinking water?

ACWWA has partnered with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to determine levels of some PFAS chemicals in Colorado drinking water supplies. Sampling completed in 2022 is summarized below.

PFAS Chemical	ACWWA Drinking Water Results (ppt)	EPA interim Health Advisory Level (ppt)
PFOA	3.2 - 3.8	0.004
PFOS	2.2 - 3.8	0.02

What is ACWWA doing about PFAS?

ACWWA will continue to work with the CDPHE to determine levels of PFAS in our water supplies and treated water. We will be working closely with the CDPHE to fully understand how future EPA regulations for PFAS will be implemented in Colorado. We are also evaluating options to further reduce concentrations of PFAS in our drinking water.

Where can I get more information on PFAS?

In addition to visiting ACWWA's webpage, you can find additional PFAS information at the following websites.

1. CDPHE: www.colorado.gov/cdphe/pfas
2. EPA: www.epa.gov/pfas
3. CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/biomonitoring/PFAS_FactSheet.html