

PFAS Media FAQs (7/16/2020)

PFAS

What is PFAS, and why is there a concern?

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of human-made chemicals that have the potential to adversely affect human health and the environment.
- PFAS have been manufactured and used in the U.S. and around the world since the 1950s, in food packaging, non-stick cookware, firefighting foam, and many other commercial household and workplace products.

Does Lakewood Water District have PFAS in the groundwater supply?

- Yes, the District has detected PFAS in some of its groundwater supply sources.

Is Lakewood Water District's water safe to drink?

- Yes, the water continues to be safe to drink. The water delivered to customers' taps meets all state and federal drinking water regulations to protect public health.
- The District's priority is to keep PFAS levels below the EPA's 70 parts per trillion (ppt) lifetime health advisory levels. For reference, 70 ppt is the equivalent of 7 grains of sand in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.
- The EPA's advisory levels offer protection for all people from adverse health effects for a lifetime of exposure to PFAS in drinking water.
- More information about PFAS in drinking water can be found on the EPA's and Washington Department of Health's websites:
 - www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Contaminants/PFAS
 - www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos

How is the water supply impacted by PFAS?

- The District's source of drinking water is groundwater wells. The District operates 31 wells that draw from four aquifers. PFAS has been detected in two of the District's shallow aquifers, impacting ten wells.
- Test results show the ten impacted wells are drawing water from the shallow aquifers and are located close to JBLM.
- Of the 10 impacted wells, one well is currently offline, two are being filtered and seven are producing water below the EPA's lifetime health advisory level and are being monitored.
 - All six operating wells in the District's shallowest aquifer (A3 Aquifer) have been tested and results show they are impacted by PFAS in the groundwater. Most of these wells are close to JBLM. The wells in this aquifer that approached or exceeded the EPA's health advisory levels have been turned off or are filtered to remove PFAS.
 - Another shallow aquifer (C Aquifer) has nine operating wells. The four wells that are close to JBLM were tested and results show PFAS levels at consistently low levels, below the EPA's lifetime health advisory levels.
 - A deep aquifer (E-Aquifer) has 13 wells. The three closest to JBLM were tested and no detectable levels of PFAS were found.
 - The District's deepest aquifer (G-Aquifer) has two wells. The well closest to JBLM had no detectable levels of PFAS.

Lawsuit

Why is the District filing the lawsuit? Why now?

- PFAS in regional groundwater supplies from which Lakewood Water District withdraws water came from firefighting foam used and disposed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM).
- The firefighting foam was used for emergency responses and training at JBLM for more than 35 years.
- The District is filing suit now against the responsible parties to recover costs the District has and will incur for near-term and long-term water quality protection projects necessary to respond to PFAS.

Who is the District suing?

- The District is filing suit against the United States government, including the Department of Defense, the Air Force and the Army, and thirteen firefighting foam manufacturers including 3M and DuPont.

Who is the District's legal counsel? Is the legal team experienced in environmental contamination litigation?

- The District's legal counsel is Marten Law LLP, a national leader in environmental and energy law. The Marten Law team working for the District includes recognized authorities in water resources, water quality, and environmental litigation.

What are the key steps in the litigation process?

- The lawsuit is being filed initially in the US District Court for the Western District of Washington, Tacoma.
- The suit will likely then be consolidated in a much larger multi-district litigation presently being heard in the US District Court for the District of South Carolina.
- The multi-district litigation includes hundreds of other suits pending in courts throughout the country involving similar claims against these same defendants for PFAS contamination from firefighting foam.
- We anticipate that a consolidated discovery and potential settlement process should be completed by late 2021, but it could take longer.

Lawsuits can be costly with an uncertain outcome. What happens if the effort fails?

- If the District's claims are not settled or resolved in the multi-district litigation effort in South Carolina, Lakewood's case may be transferred back to Washington for trial in mid-to late-2021, or perhaps later.

What damages is the District claiming?

- The lawsuit seeks to recover full past and future costs related to the District's response to PFAS.
- These costs include past and future infrastructure and filtration upgrades to the District's wells, additional testing, attorneys' fees, and relief for all actions needed to continue to protect the District's water supplies from PFAS and to ensure a safe and reliable water supply.
- The District anticipates having to incur over \$377 million in future costs over the next 50 years for water quality protection projects.

Rate Impacts

Is the District pursuing other funding sources?

- Yes, the District is seeking every avenue of funding to help pay for projects that are now required because of the PFAS issue.
- The District's multi-pronged efforts include working with our federal and state elected representatives and regulatory agencies to get fair compensation from the federal government through the appropriation process; pursuing federal and state grant funding; and applying for low-financing loan options available to water districts.

Is the District waiting to get money before fixing the PFAS problem?

- No, the District is not waiting to fix the problem. Attaining additional funds may take many years.
- The District has undertaken, and will continue to undertake, water quality protection projects to ensure its customers continue to have reliable access to safe drinking water.
- Any additional funding that the District obtains will be used to reimburse today's costs for water quality protection and to fund such future costs.

Will customers' water bills increase as a result of PFAS?

- Water rates will likely rise as a result of the District's water quality protection responses to PFAS.
- Careful planning and phasing of capital improvement projects are helping the District keep rates affordable for customers.

Public Health

What criteria does the District use to take wells offline?

- The District's priority is to keep PFAS levels below the EPA's lifetime health advisory levels of 70 ppt. The advisory levels offer protection for all people from adverse health effects for a lifetime of exposure to PFAS in drinking water.
- Ongoing testing allows District staff to monitor PFAS trends in the water supply and make plans to turn off or filter affected wells when levels approach or exceed the EPA's lifetime health advisory levels.

What about populations sensitive to health risks? Do the EPA health advisory levels protect them?

- Yes, the EPA set its health advisory levels for PFAS to offer protection for all people, including sensitive populations, throughout their lifetime from adverse health effects resulting from exposure to PFAS in drinking water.
- The District understands PFAS can be a concern to customers. Customers are directed to public health experts at the Washington Department of Health and the EPA to learn more. Customers are also encouraged to seek advice from their healthcare providers.

Isn't any amount of chemicals in the drinking water a health risk? Why not take wells off sooner?

- The District uses the EPA lifetime health advisory levels to make water supply decisions.
- Ongoing testing allows District staff to monitor PFAS trends in the water supply and make plans to turn off or filter affected wells when levels approach or exceed the EPA's lifetime health advisory levels.
- The EPA reports the advisory levels offer a margin of protection for all people from adverse health effects for a lifetime of exposure to PFAS in drinking water.

What actions have been taken to make sure the water will continue to be safe to drink?

- The District is protecting customers' health by continuing to test the groundwater supply.
- Testing groundwater supply allows District staff to monitor PFAS trends in the water supply and make plans to turn off or filter affected wells when levels approach or exceed the EPA's lifetime health advisory levels.
- The District has also designed and constructed a filtration system for the Ponders Wellfield to remove PFAS. A second filtration system for the Scotts Wellfield is in design and is estimated to be online before the end of 2021.

How can I find out about the quality of water in my neighborhood?

- Lakewood Water District's water meets all state and federal regulations for safe drinking water.
- Information on water quality is provided in the Annual Water Quality Report available on the District's website.

Will we have enough water if more wells need to be shut down?

- Yes, we are working with two well-respected engineering consulting firms, Murraysmith and Pacific Groundwater Group, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation on maintaining supply while addressing PFAS in the groundwater from which the District draws its water supplies.
- Options to ensure we have enough water supply include filtering more wells, increasing capacity at existing wells, and drilling new wells.

How is Lakewood Water District keeping customers informed?

- The District is committed to keeping customers informed as more guidance becomes available, and decisions are reached about the water supply system.
- For more information on the District's response to PFAS and other actions taken by the Lakewood Water District, visit the website at: <https://www.lakewoodwater.org/lwd/page/pfas-topics>.