

ALPHA 2021 Resolution 2021-05

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Alaska

WHEREAS, Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are human-made chemicals that are manufactured for their heat-, water-, and stain-resistant properties. They are used in a wide variety of common products, like rain gear, non-stick cookware, stain-resistant fabrics, and certain types of firefighting foams called aqueous film-forming foams (AFFF), which are used to extinguish fuel and chemical fires (ADHSS 2019).

WHEREAS, scientists are still learning about the potential health effects of exposure to PFAS. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) states that PFAS may interfere with the body's natural hormones, increase cholesterol levels, affect the immune system, and increase the risk of some cancers (ASTDR 2020).

WHEREAS, In Alaska, airports, military installations and formerly known Department of Defense (DoD) sites that used or currently use firefighting foams are the main environmental sources of PFAS (ADHSS 2019; ADOT&PF 2019). AFFF discharged during firefighting activities can eventually migrate into groundwater, contaminating nearby drinking water supplies (ADEC 2020a).

WHEREAS, investigations have shown that there are active AFFF groundwater contamination sites in Alaska. As of March 2020, active sites include the Greater Fairbanks Area (multiple sites), Amchitka, Anchorage, Bethel, Clear, Coldfoot, Dillingham, Fort Greely, Galena, Gustavus, JBER, Juneau, King Salmon, Prudhoe Bay, Soldotna, Utqiagvik (Barrow), Valdez, Yakutat, as well as Alyeska Pipeline Pump Stations 6 (near Stevens Village), 7 (near Minto), 8 (Salcha), and 10 (near Paxton) (ADEC 2020b).

WHEREAS, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued interim recommendations for screening levels and preliminary remediation goals for two PFAS chemicals (PFOA and PFOS) on February 20, 2020 (U.S. EPA 2020).

WHEREAS, ATSDR developed Minimal Risk Level MRL screening values for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS) and perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA) that can be converted into drinking water concentrations for adults and children (ATSDR, 2018). These values are substance-specific guidelines intended to serve as screening levels by ATSDR health assessors and other responders to identify contaminants and potential health effects that may be of concern at hazardous waste sites.

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska has the statutory authority to take action to protect the public health of Alaskans by promoting enforceable regulatory and protective criteria for PFAS based on the current scientific evidence and recommendations supplied by federal agencies, such as the EPA and ATSDR.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we propose that the State of Alaska mandate the following actions:

- Recommend actions to protect the public's health through:
 - Monitor federal and state-level PFAS advisory limits and adapt the most stringent evidence-based standards for Alaska
- Identify and mitigate contaminated drinking water:
 - Monitor drinking water for PFAS contamination
 - Mitigate PFAS contaminated drinking water
- Prevent further human exposure to PFAS contamination in drinking water by requiring the parties responsible for the PFAS contamination to provide potable water to households with contaminated drinking water that exceeds PFAS advisory limits
- To mitigate potential environmental and human health impacts related to AFFF foam, the state of Alaska should encourage fire departments to follow best practices related to the use of AFFF foam.
 - Mandate that Alaskan fire departments adopt best practices to limit the use of AFFF foam, including:
 - Do not use AFFF foam for training
 - Only use AFFF foam for incidents involving liquid fuels
 - Use AFFF foam only to protect human life and critical infrastructure
 - Regularly re-evaluate a plan transition to non-PFAS class B foam as safe and effective alternatives to AFFF become available
 - Continue to monitor the available research on the human and environmental health effects of AFFF foam in order to protect both the public and firefighters.
 - Require reporting of AFFF discharges larger than 5 gallons to DEC.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association will:

- Advocate for public policy development at the national, state, and local level that incorporate these recommendations.
- Work with other organizations and communities in Alaska to advocate for these recommendations.

FISCAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT STATEMENT: There is no financial cost for this resolution. The purpose is to prevent the human cost of the harmful effects of PFAS to human health.

Sources:

ADEC (Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation) 2020a. Welcome to the DEC PFAS Page. Accessed on December 13, 2020, at: <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/pfas/>

ADEC (Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation) 2020b. PFAS Contaminated Sites. Accessed on December 13, 2020, at <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/pfas/responses/>



ADHSS (Alaska Department of Health and Social Services) 2019. Fact Sheet on Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Drinking Water. Accessed on December 13, 2020, at: http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/eph/Documents/PFCs/PFAS_FactSheet.pdf

ADOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) 2019. Alaska PFAS Information. Accessed on December 13, 2020, at: <http://dot.alaska.gov/airportwater/>

ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) 2018. Toxicological profile for Perfluoroalkyls. (Draft for Public Comment). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Accessed on December 13, 2020, at: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/tp.asp?id=1117&tid=237>

U. S.EPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency) 2020. Accessed on December 13, 2020, at: <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/interim-recommendations-addressing-groundwater-contaminated-pfoa-and-pfos>