



PFAS: Frequently Asked Questions

What are **PFAS**?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are man-made substances that are resistant to heat, water, and oil. Two of the more common PFAS are perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

PFAS has been used in the United States since the 1940s to produce stain-resistant, water-resistant, and non-stick products. They are also difficult to remove from our water supply.

PFOS and PFOA are no longer manufactured or imported into the US. Although, some imported goods may still contain trace amounts of these substances. Other PFAS goods and materials are still produced and used in the US.

Where are **PFAS** Found and How are People Exposed?

As the result of years of manufacturing and product use, PFAS can be found in air, water, and soil as well as products we regularly use. PFAS are found in many products, such as:



STAIN-RESISTANT COATINGS ON CARPET, CLOTHING, AND FURNITURE



PAPER PACKAGING FOR FOOD



PERSONAL CARE AND BEAUTY PRODUCTS, INCLUDING SHAMPOOS, LOTIONS AND SUNSCREENS



FIREFIGHTING FOAM



NON-STICK COATINGS ON COOKWARE



SURFACE WATER, RUNOFF AND SOIL (THAT HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH FIREFIGHTING FOAM)

People are exposed to this chemical by breathing, ingesting or touching products containing PFAS. Studies indicate that continued exposure to elevated levels may result in adverse health effects.

Has **PFAS** Been Detected In Our Water?

Yes, the City has monitored and detected PFOS and PFOA in parts per trillion (ppt) levels in its groundwater supply. As always, we carefully monitor for PFAS and other substances in our water to ensure that the water served to our customers meets all applicable standards.

How Much Is A **Part Per Trillion** (ppt)?

A ppt is a microscopic measurement for particles in the water and would be equivalent to a few grains of sugar in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.



How Did PFAS Get Into Drinking Water?

For decades, people have been exposed to PFAS through products that they come in contact with daily, including non-stick cookware, personal and beauty products, food packaging and stain-resistant coatings found on carpet, furniture and clothing.



PFAS can enter groundwater supplies through the use of firefighting foam, landfills, wastewater treatment plant discharge and industrial sites. We are actively exploring treatment options for current PFAS in our groundwater.

What Is *The City Of Downey* Doing To Address PFAS?

The City of Downey is taking proactive steps to address detected levels of PFAS chemicals in the groundwater, including:



DESIGNING PFAS WATER TREATMENT FACILITIES



PURSUING GRANTS TO FUND PFAS WATER TREATMENT PROJECTS



INCREASING OUTREACH WITH OUR CUSTOMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS



FILING OF A LAWSUIT AGAINST SEVERAL COMPANIES FOR THEIR ROLES IN INTRODUCING PFAS INTO THE WATER SUPPLY



CONDUCTING REGULAR WATER SAMPLING



City of Downey

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Want More Information?

Should you have questions or want additional information about the City's water quality you can refer to the City's Consumer Confidence Report located at www.downeygis.org/wqr/2020.pdf or you can contact the Public Works Utilities Division at **562-904-7202**.

How Do We Monitor Our Water For PFAS?

The State Water Board Division of Drinking Water has established an interim "notification level" and "response level" for PFOS and PFOA for water agencies. These interim levels exist because currently there are no federal and state standards for PFAS. The City follows these state guidelines for notifying the City Council, customers and other stakeholders.

NOTIFICATION LEVEL (NL): Water agencies are required to notify their governing bodies when PFAS in the water exceeds the NL. The NL for PFOA in California is 5.1 ppt; the NL for PFOS is 6.5 ppt.

Since NLs for both PFOA and PFOS have been exceeded by the City's wells, the City Council has been notified per State Water Board requirements.

RESPONSE LEVEL (RL): For readings at or above 10 ppt for PFOA and 40 ppt for PFOS, water agencies are required to do either one of the following: Treat the water, remove the well from service, or continue using the well and provide public notification.

Under the latest General Monitoring Order issued by the State Water Board, exceedance of the RL is based on a quarterly running annual average (QRAA). Notice has been provided to the City's water customers because its QRAA has exceeded one or both of the interim response levels for PFOA and PFOS in its groundwater wells.

While there are no current federal or state water quality standards for PFAS, the City is proactively moving forward with treatment facilities, pursuing grant funds and recouping costs via litigation to help with the cost of implementing well treatment.

DETECTION: Beginning in 2020, detection of PFOA or PFOS in drinking water requires water agencies to include these water quality monitoring results in their annual consumer confidence report (CCR).

Because both PFOA and PFOS were detected in the City's groundwater wells, this information is included in the City's 2020 CCR which was mailed to customers and placed on the City's website.

Will I Be Notified If PFAS Is Found In My Water Supply?

The City is committed to timely and transparent communication with our community. We have communicated this information to our customers through our annual Consumer Confidence Report and public notification.

We also provide this information to our City Council in accordance with State requirements.

Does Our Water Meet The Water Quality Standard?



While there are no federal or state water quality standards for PFAS, including PFOS and PFOA at this time, we protect our water at its source and work with state experts to immediately address any pollutants as we are doing with PFAS. In addition, our water is rigorously tested thousands of times per year to ensure it meets or exceeds all applicable standards for any potential pollutants. We also continue to adhere to the applicable "notification level" and "response level" guidelines set by the State Water Board DDW.



Some customers may make the personal choice to use water filters or drink bottled water. Certified water filtration systems can reduce levels of PFAS below the Environmental Protection Agency's health advisory levels; however, the water our customers receive already meets those levels.