



# FAQ

## Michigan PFAS Statewide Sampling Initiative Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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### 1. What are PFAS?

Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) (sometimes known as perfluorinated chemicals or PFCs) are a class of organic chemicals that are fire resistant and repel stains, oil, grease, and water. PFAS have been manufactured since the 1950s and have been used in numerous industrial processes and consumer products, such as fire-fighting foams, stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, and fast food wrappers. PFAS are persistent and bioaccumulate in the environment which intensifies their potential public health threat. PFAS are found in the environment worldwide. Two of these compounds, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOS), were widely used in fire-fighting foams, paints, polishes, and lubricants.

The manufacturers of PFOA and PFOS agreed to phase out the production of these compounds around a decade ago, but they are still used in the field. New PFAS have since been developed to replace the ones no longer being manufactured; however, the environmental and health impacts have not been studied.

## 2. What is the health advisory level?

Currently, there is no regulatory drinking water standard for any of the PFAS chemicals. However, in May 2016, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) established a non-regulatory Lifetime Health Advisory (LHA) for PFOA and PFOS of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) combined, or individually if only one of them is present. The US EPA recommends that this LHA applies to both short-term (i.e., weeks to months) scenarios during pregnancy and lactation, as well as lifetime-exposure scenarios. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), as well as the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), have used this LHA of 70 ppt to inform decisions on actions that should be taken or are recommended to reduce exposure and prevent increased risk to public health from these PFAS contaminants. The US EPA has not yet set health advisory levels for other PFAS.

## 3. What are the health effects of PFAS exposure?

According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR), some studies in humans have shown that certain PFAS may: affect growth, learning, and behavior of infants and older children; lower a woman's chance of getting pregnant; interfere with the body's natural hormones; increase cholesterol levels; affect the immune system; and increase the risk of certain cancers.

## 4. Why are public water supplies being sampled?

The MDEQ is carrying out this project as a proactive measure to identify where PFAS compounds occur and determine actions necessary to protect public health. All Community Water Supplies (CWS) with their own source of water will be sampled during this effort. In addition, the 461 schools in Michigan that use their own wells will be sampled. These schools are classified as Non-Transient Non-Community Water Supplies (NTNCWS). This effort will be prioritized based on factors such as population served, potential vulnerability to contamination, and sampling logistics.

## 5. Who is conducting the sample collection?

The MDEQ's contractor, AECOM (an environmental consulting firm) will be conducting the sampling effort. AECOM's sampling team is experienced in PFAS sampling and ensuring proper sampling technique and consistent methodologies are used throughout this project.

## 6. When will I receive my sample results?

It is anticipated you will receive your sample results four to six weeks following sample collection. The results will be provided to the designated contact for your water supply from the MDEQ via e-mail. If the results are above the LHA of 70 ppt, the MDEQ will notify you immediately by phone.

## 7. What will happen after I receive my sample results?

The MDEQ will be available to provide you with additional guidance. As a water supply, you are encouraged to share your sampling results with your consumers in the way you feel is most appropriate. The MDEQ will post all sampling results on the PFAS web site for the public to view within five days of the results notification letter. The results will also go to your local health department, and they are available for health-related questions. The results of the laboratory analysis will determine if additional samples must be collected or other actions are necessary.

## 8. Where can I get more information about PFAS?

- **State of Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART)** webpage serving as the main resource for public information on PFAS contamination in Michigan  
[www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse](http://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse)
- **United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA)** webpage including basic information, US EPA actions, and links to informational resources  
[www.epa.gov/pfas](http://www.epa.gov/pfas)
- **Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR)** webpage including health information, exposure, and links to additional resources  
[www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas)

## 9. Who can I contact for more information about this sampling event?

Please contact Ms. Lois Elliott Graham, Environmental Quality Analyst, MDEQ, Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance Division, at 810-730-8674 or [DEQ-PFAS-DrinkingWater@michigan.gov](mailto:DEQ-PFAS-DrinkingWater@michigan.gov)

