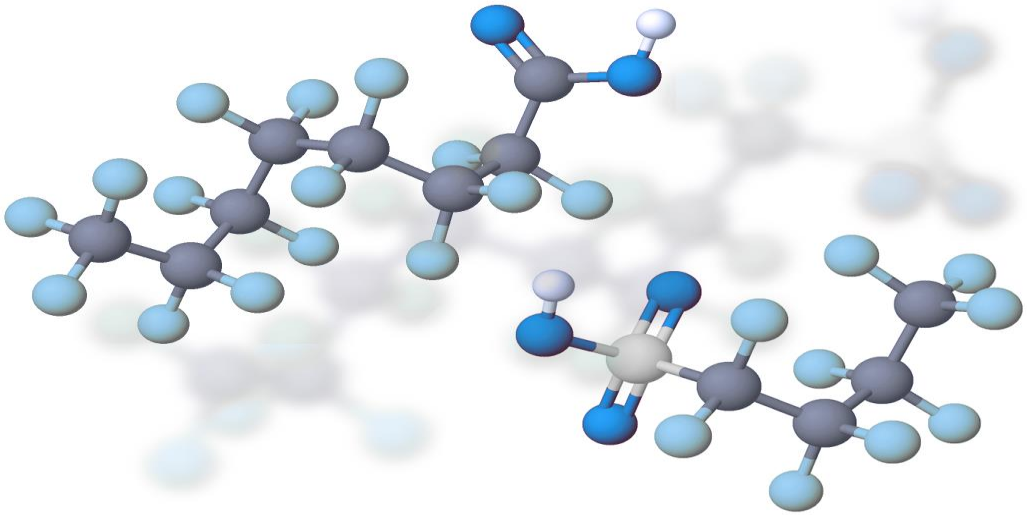
PFAS Background and Action Plan



What are PFAS?

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that have been in use since the 1940s.

- There are many PFAS chemicals, including the chemicals perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), and GenX chemicals (HFPO dimer acid and its potassium salt).

What are PFAS?

- Due to their strong carbon-fluorine bonds, many PFAS can be very persistent in the environment with degradation periods of years, decades, or longer under natural conditions.

- Two of the most studied PFAS are Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS).

Where are PFAS found?

- PFAS are (or have been) found in a wide array of consumer products like cookware, food packaging, and stain and water repellants used in fabrics, carpets and outerwear.
- PFAS manufacturing and processing facilities, and airports and military installations that use firefighting foams which contain PFAS.

How can this impact people?

- Because of their widespread use and environmental persistence, most people have been exposed to PFAS chemicals.
- Some PFAS chemicals can accumulate and can stay in the human body for long periods of time.
- There is evidence that exposure to certain PFAS may lead to adverse health effects.

EPA's Previous Work on PFAS

- Certain PFAS chemicals are no longer manufactured in the United States as a result of the EPA's PFOA Stewardship Program. All companies met the PFOA Stewardship Program goals by 2015.
- Issued various significant new use rules (SNURs).
- Monitored for six PFAS chemicals under the Safe Drinking Water Act to understand the nationwide occurrence of these chemicals in our drinking water systems.
- Issued drinking water lifetime health advisories for PFOA and PFOS of 70 parts per trillion individually or combined.

EPA's Previous Work on PFAS

- Working to advance research on other PFAS chemicals to better understand their health impacts, exposure pathways, options for treatment and removal
- Released draft toxicity assessments for GenX chemicals and PFBS
- Announced the initiation of assessments for five additional PFAS (PFBA, PFHxS, PFHxA, PFNA, PFDA) via the EPA's IRIS Program.
- Issued enforcement orders, provided oversight for federal agency cleanups and assisted state enforcement actions
- Provided technical assistance related to dozens of areas of PFAS contamination around the country.

Action Plan Background

- EPA convened a two-day National Leadership Summit on PFAS in Washington, D.C.
- Following the Summit, the agency hosted a series of visits during the summer of 2018 in communities directly impacted by PFAS where EPA interacted with more than 1,000 people.
- The EPA's PFAS Action Plan was developed based on feedback from these events in addition to information received from approximately 120,000 comments submitted to the public docket.

Action Plan Purpose

- Provides EPA's first multi-media, multi-program, national research, management and risk communication plan to address a challenge like PFAS.
- Responds to the extensive public input the agency has received over the past year during the PFAS National Leadership Summit, multiple community engagements, and through the public docket.
- As a result of this unprecedented outreach, the Action Plan provides the necessary tools to assist states, tribes, and communities in addressing PFAS.

Highlighted Actions

Drinking Water

- The EPA is committed to following the MCL rulemaking process as established by SDWA.
- As a next step, EPA will propose a regulatory determination for PFOA and PFOS by the end of this year.
- The Agency is also gathering and evaluating information to determine if regulation is appropriate for other chemicals in the PFAS family.

Highlighted Actions

Cleanup

- The EPA will facilitate cleanup efforts by providing groundwater cleanup recommendations.
- The EPA is initiating the regulatory development process for listing certain PFAS as hazardous substances.

Highlighted Actions

Monitoring

- The EPA will propose nationwide drinking water monitoring for PFAS under the next UCMR monitoring cycle.

Research

- The EPA is rapidly expanding the scientific foundation for understanding and managing risk from PFAS.
- This research is organized around understanding toxicity, understanding exposure, assessing risk, and identifying effective treatment and remediation actions.

Highlighted Actions

Toxics

- The EPA is considering the addition of PFAS chemicals to the Toxics Release Inventory
- EPA is issuing a supplemental proposal to guard against the unreviewed reintroduction and new use, through domestic production or import, of certain PFAS chemicals in the United States.

Highlighted Actions

Enforcement

- The EPA uses enforcement tools, when appropriate, to address PFAS exposure in the environment and assist states in enforcement activities.

Risk Communications

- The EPA will work collaboratively to develop a risk communication toolbox that includes multi-media materials and messaging for federal, state, tribal, and local partners to use with the public.

Action Plan Next Steps

- To implement the plan, the EPA will continue to work in close coordination with multiple entities, including other federal agencies, states, tribes, local governments, water utilities, industry, and the public.
- The EPA will provide updates on actions outlined in the plan on the Agency's website.

Questions?

Thank you