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Update on EPA Release of PFAS Health Advisories

On Wednesday, June 15, 2022, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released new drinking water lifetime health advisories for four per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, referred to collectively as PFAS. EPA's action provides updated health advisories for Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS), which have been widely used in manufacturing consumer products since the 1940s and are the most commonly studied chemicals in the PFAS group. In addition, two more PFAS compounds have been added to the EPA health advisory as outlined below.

Interim Updated Lifetime Health Advisories

Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) - 0.004 parts per trillion (ppt)*
Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) - 0.020 ppt

Final Lifetime Health Advisories

Hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid (GenX) - 10 ppt
Perfluorobutane sulfonate (PFBS) - 2,000 ppt

** 1 part per trillion is a very small measure of a substance in water, equivalent to a single drop of water in an Olympic sized swimming pool.*

These new health advisory levels are much lower than previous advisories issued in 2016 for PFAS (70 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS). According to an EPA fact sheet on this issue, the updated health advisories are based on studies of health effects in populations exposed to these chemicals. The health advisories are based on lifetime exposure to PFOA and PFOS in drinking water, assuming 70 years of exposure.

Health advisories are non-enforceable guidelines, different from drinking water regulations covered under the Safe Drinking Water Act. EPA is currently working on a federal standard for PFAS in drinking water, and we expect these new drinking water limits to be established later this year. Here in Pennsylvania, the Department of Environmental Protection has already issued a draft drinking water limit for PFAS that is currently under review. Our preliminary test results show our water sources to be below these proposed state limits for PFAS in drinking water. However, LCA will be monitoring our water quality and working closely with DEP and EPA to understand if there are actions we should be taking now, before the new drinking water standards have been established.

According to a statement from the [American Water Works Association](#) in response to these new levels, “the PFOA and PFOS advisory levels are extremely low and do not reflect the draft recommendations of EPA’s own expert Science Advisory Board review. The health advisory levels at parts per quadrillion are undetectable by modern laboratory methods.”

This very low health advisory level reflects the potential seriousness of the impact of PFAS. PFAS compounds can be found in everyday products we use. Some examples include non-stick cookware, stain-resistant clothing, substances used to make carpets resistant to stains, compounds used in water-resistant products and clothing, food packaging, and firefighting foam. The compounds do not break down quickly and remain in the environment in air, soil, and water, including drinking water sources.

LCA is continuously monitoring emerging issues and regulations to understand the impact on our treatment processes and daily work to protect public health and the environment. We will take necessary action to continue to meet or exceed federal and state safety standards and adapt to changes in regulations as they are determined. Our rigorous sampling and risk assessment process is aligned with the scientific framework of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

We remain dedicated to protecting public health and the environment through our high-quality water and wastewater services. LCA supports the establishment of drinking water standards for PFAS and other emerging contaminants using a science-based regulatory approach.

[Click here](#) to view a fact sheet from EPA.