HOUSTON PUBLIC WORKS

PFAS Frequently Asked Questions

What are PFAS?

PFAS are a large group of man-made chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products worldwide since the 1940s.

- PFAS do not occur naturally but are widespread in the environment.
- PFAS are found in people, wildlife and fish all over the world.
- Some PFAS can stay in people's bodies a long time.

Some PFAS do not break down easily in the environment.

How does PFAS get into drinking water?

The four major sources of PFAS are:

- fire training/fire response sites,
- industrial sites,
- landfills, and
- wastewater treatment plants/biosolids.

PFAS can get into drinking water when products containing them are used or spilled onto the ground or into lakes and rivers. Once in groundwater, PFAS are easily transported large distances and can contaminate drinking wells.

PFAS in the air can also end up in rivers and lakes used for drinking water. Additional information regarding the fate and transport of PFAS in the environment may be found on the Interstate Technology Regulatory Council

What are the levels in the City of Houston's drinking water?

The City of Houston is currently monitoring 29 different PFAS compounds and 1 metal in compliance with EPA monitoring regulations. We will be conducting tests throughout 2023 and 2024 as part of our participation in the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR). Results will be posted on a quarterly basis and will be available online.

The results of the monitoring we are doing, along with monitoring from thousands of other water utilities, will be used to help determine the final regulations.

What is City of Houston doing about PFAS?

City of Houston is committed to ensuring a clean, safe water supply for our customers. Our water quality laboratory is analyzing samples for PFAS-related compounds in the drinking water that leaves our treatment plants in cooperation with EPA's UCMR 3 and UCMR 5 programs.

In addition, the City of Houston has been closely studying the evolving information about these chemicals and preparing for solutions in case future test results are above any of the proposed EPA-recommended levels.

We also have been involved in discussions with legislators, state and local regulators and our sister utilities on how to best find, control, remove and prevent PFAS contamination in water.

What can you do about PFAS?

You can help! Learn more about where PFAS is used in our society and about alternative, PFAS-free products that you could use instead. This will not only protect your health, but also reduce the amount of PFAS in circulation.

Several groups are working on lists of PFAS-free consumer goods, including PFAS Central.org