

PFAS 101

What are PFAS?

PFAS stands for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. PFAS are man-made chemicals that are resistant to heat, water, and oil. They have been used since the 1940s to manufacture various consumer products, including fire-fighting foam and stain-resistant, water-resistant, and nonstick items.

Many PFAS do not break down easily and can build up in people, animals, and the environment over time. This is why they are often referred to as “forever chemicals”.

Scientific studies have shown that exposure to certain PFAS can be harmful to people and animals, depending on the level and duration of exposure.

Pending PFAS Regulation

PFAS are not currently regulated nationally or in Arizona. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed a national regulation for PFAS in drinking water. The proposed regulation includes “Maximum Contaminant Levels” for six common PFAS, which are based on long-term, chronic exposure to low levels. EPA expects to finalize the drinking water regulation by 2024, and then water systems will be given three years to address PFAS contamination.

In addition to PFAS drinking water regulations, EPA has proposed other actions like designating some PFAS as hazardous substances, which would allow the state and federal government to hold polluters accountable. EPA also proposed aquatic life standards to help protect wildlife in our streams and rivers.

What We Are Doing to Protect Public Health:



ADEQ has conducted targeted testing since 2018 to understand the impact of PFAS in Arizona. This testing has included drinking water, groundwater, wastewater, and biosolids.



To prevent PFAS from entering the environment, we launched a pilot program to help fire departments stop using PFAS-containing aqueous film-forming foams. We have worked with 52 fire departments across Arizona to replace and safely discard almost 10,000 gallons of foam to date.

Testing Arizona’s Drinking Water

EPA is requiring that public water systems serving 3,300 people or more test their drinking water for PFAS. However, most systems in Arizona serve fewer than 3,300 people. Therefore,



we are testing the smaller water systems even though the EPA does not require it. Our goal is to make sure that all regulated water systems are tested for PFAS as soon as possible.

What Happens if PFAS are Detected?

If PFAS are detected, we ask systems to follow EPA recommendations to inform customers, examine steps to limit exposure, and take more samples to assess the level, scope, and source of contamination. When a system’s PFAS concentrations exceed EPA’s proposed limits, we help the systems perform additional testing, begin exploring potential solutions and even apply for federal funding, if needed. We also provide systems with a PFAS Toolkit to help them meet the challenges. The toolkit includes information about funding, customer communication and next steps.

Benefits of ADEQ’s Drinking Water Testing Program

ADEQ’s PFAS drinking water testing program offers several benefits to small drinking water systems and their customers. It provides free PFAS testing to these systems, potentially saving them significant costs. It also offers assistance with next steps if PFAS are detected. With many systems across the country facing similar challenges, it is important that Arizona’s drinking water systems begin planning to meet the new rules as soon as possible.



Want to learn more?

Visit azdeq.gov/PFAS-Resources to:

- Contact us
- Watch our *Intro to PFAS in Arizona* video
- Explore other resources

You can also find our PFAS Interactive Data Map at bit.ly/myPFASmap to see results from our testing since 2018.