

BRIEFING CARD

Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) Testing

Public Statement:

“The Army has notified both Congress and Army Families that although prior testing of Army-provided drinking water at six installations across the U.S. and worldwide identified the presence of two commonly used, man-made chemicals, currently there is no health threat to Soldiers, Family Members, and Civilians because they are only drinking water that is safely below EPA’s lifetime health advisory level of 70 parts per trillion.”

“The Army is committed to protecting human health and ensuring the supply of safe drinking water to its Soldiers, Family Members, and Civilians. As part of this commitment, the Army will continue its comprehensive PFOS/PFOA testing program.”

Background:

PFOS and PFOA are perfluorinated compounds, a family of man-made chemicals that have been used for many years in various products such as carpets, clothing, fabrics, paper packaging for food and other materials resistant to water, grease and stains. They have also been part of the chemical makeup of aqueous film forming foam (AFFF), an important product used by military and civilian firefighting units to suppress fuel fires. AFFF is often directly discharged into the environment where it is used to fight fires. Firefighting is a critical function on Army installations and ensures the protection of people and property. The EPA has promoted the phasing out of PFOS, PFOA and other PFCs in products since the early 2000s.

Army-owned or operated drinking water systems are being sampled for PFOS and PFOA as part of the Army’s ongoing effort to ensure Soldiers, Civilians and Family Members have access to good quality drinking water. This sampling is being conducted to ensure that the presence of PFOS and PFOA does not exceed the new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lifetime health advisory (LHA) levels, issued in May 2016. The Army will inform consumers of sampling results and the actions taken to eliminate or reduce PFOS and PFOA in water systems if concentrations are detected above the LHA levels.

Key Messages:

- There is no current health threat from drinking water at the six identified installations as the Army has taken actions such as shutting down wells and connecting users to municipal water supplies to ensure that drinking water is below the LHA. Drinking water is safe.
- Although PFOS/PFOA are unregulated and commonly used, the Army is taking aggressive measures to reduce mission-related PFOS/PFOA in installation and supporting communities’ drinking water sources.
- The Army’s goal is to protect human health and ensure mission activities do not impact installation and supporting communities’ access to safe drinking water.
- The Army is using a comprehensive approach – identify, respond, prevent – to assess the potential for PFOS/PFOA in drinking water, on and off installations, and respond appropriately.

- The Army is committed to being transparent in its handling of PFOS/PFOA-related issues, and related information and maintaining open dialogue with communities, regulators and other stakeholders.
- The Army is committed to supplying quality drinking water to its Soldiers, Family Members, and Civilians and will continue its comprehensive PFOS and PFOA testing program.

FAQs:

What type of chemicals are PFOS and PFOA and where are they found?

PFOS and PFOA are perfluorinated compounds, a family of man-made chemicals that have been used for many years in various products such as carpets, clothing, fabrics, paper packaging for food and other materials that are resistant to water, grease and stains. They have also been part of the chemical makeup of aqueous film forming foam (AFFF), an important product used by military and civilian firefighting units to suppress fuel fires. AFFF is often directly discharged into the environment where it is used to fight fires, such as at an airfield. The EPA has promoted the phasing out of PFOS, PFOA and similar PFCs in products since the early 2000s (ATSDR 2015a).

What are the PFOS and PFOA LHA levels for Drinking Water?

In May 2016, the EPA released LHAs for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water. These LHAs represent a concentration in drinking water that is not expected to produce adverse effects with daily consumption over an entire lifetime. The PFOS and PFOA LHAs are 70 parts per trillion (ppt) individually or combined if both are detected in drinking water. The EPA's LHA levels include a significant margin of safety to ensure they are protective of the most sensitive sub-populations while drinking the water over a lifetime. The EPA LHA levels are based on the effects of PFOS and PFOA on laboratory animals and epidemiological studies of human populations. For context, one (1) ppt is equivalent to one (1) drop of water in 20 Olympic-sized swimming pools. As part of the Army's commitment to supplying quality drinking water to its Soldiers, Family Members, and Civilians, the Army implemented a comprehensive PFOS and PFOA testing program.

What is known about the possible health effects of exposure to PFOS or PFOA in drinking water?

If you have health concerns regarding potential previous exposure to PFOS or PFOA in drinking water, please contact your primary healthcare provider or pediatrician.

Where can I find out more about PFOS and PFOA?

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos> Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=1116&tid=237>

Policy and References:

- DoDI 4715.06, Environmental Compliance in the United States, May 4, 2015
<https://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/471506p.pdf>
- DoDI 4715.08, Remediation of Environmental Contamination Outside the United States, November 1, 2013 <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/471508p.pdf>
- DoDI 4715.18, Emerging Contaminants
<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/471518p.pdf>
- Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), 1974 <http://www.epw.senate.gov/sdwa.pdf>
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1969
<http://www.epw.senate.gov/nepa69.pdf>

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