



Public Affairs Guidance

PFOS/PFOA at Air Force Installations

26 October 2016

1. PURPOSE

To effectively communicate the Air Force's response to potential contamination in drinking water supplies from two perfluorinated compounds: Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

2. OBJECTIVE

Promote an understanding of the Air Force PFOS/PFOA response with regulators, community members and other stakeholders through a comprehensive communication campaign that:

- Identifies stakeholders and ensures accurate and consistent messaging
- Maintains transparency Air Force-wide
- Centralizes knowledge
- Provide installations' tools to tell the Air Force story

3. SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Although PFOS and PFOA are commonly referred to as "PFCs" by the media and public, Air Force messaging and discussions will refer specifically to PFOS and PFOA. The term "PFCs" covers a large group of manufactured compounds, but PFOS and PFOA are the only compounds with health advisories for drinking water.

Two documents have been added to Appendix A: The PFOS/PFOA Engagement document provides an outline of various PA engagement milestones, actions and responsible parties. The primary takeaway from this is ensuring all releases are routed through the proper review channels before release; this ensures messaging is consistent, and federal, state and community stakeholders are properly notified. For more information on roles and responsibilities and coordinating public releases, see section 9 below. Appendix A now includes two frequently asked questions and responses: one FAQ focuses on the Air Force response to PFOS/PFOA; the other FAQ addresses AFFF replacement and containment and safety measures.

4. STATEMENT

The Air Force mission is to Fly, Fight and Win and our fire-fighting mission is critical to protecting people and property.

We are committed to protecting human health and ensuring safe drinking water for our Airmen and impacted communities. We are systematically sampling groundwater and soil where Aqueous Film Forming Foam was released, prioritizing release sites with a higher probability of groundwater contamination. Where our activities contaminated drinking water above the Environmental Protection Agency health advisory, we immediately provide safe drinking water and implement long-term steps to ensure safe drinking water, including transitioning to a more environmentally responsible AFFF alternative.



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5. BACKGROUND

PFOS and PFOA are synthetic fluorinated organic compounds used in many industrial and consumer products, and in foam used by commercial industries and the armed services to make petroleum-based fires. These chemicals have been used for many years to make products that resist heat, stains, grease and water. In 1970, the Air Force began using aqueous film forming foam (AFFF), which contains PFOS and PFOA, to extinguish petroleum fires. AFFF is the most efficient extinguishing method for petroleum-based fires and is widely used across the firefighting industry, to include all commercial airports, to protect people and property.

- In 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued provisional health advisories for PFOS and PFOA in drinking water. On May 19, 2016, EPA established lifetime health advisory levels of 70 parts per trillion for PFOS and PFOA in drinking water. These two compounds are classified as emerging contaminants due to evolving regulatory standards.
- The Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC) began a comprehensive assessment process in 2010 that determined firefighting foam containing PFOS and PFOA may have been released at fire training areas, emergency response and aircraft crash sites across the Air Force at active, Reserve, Air National Guard and closed installations. AFCEC is taking a three-step approach to address potential PFOS/PFOA contamination of drinking water supplies: identify, respond, prevent.

6. PA APPROACH The PA posture for PFOS/PFOA is active.

The Air Force supports establishing positive and collaborative relationships with installation and community population, and other stakeholders. Stories and best practices highlighting local efforts on this campaign should be pushed to the Air Force Civil Engineer Center's Public Affairs team for potential Air Force-level coverage.

AFCEC/PA maintains a public webpage for the Air Force response to PFOS/PFOA (<http://www.afcec.af.mil/Home/Environment/Perfluorinated-Compounds/>) which includes community updates, FAQs, fact sheets, site inspection schedules and other information.

For internal resources (i.e. talking points, templates and other documents), AFCEC/PA maintains an internal library within eDASH:

[https://cs1.eis.af.mil/sites/edash-workspaces/Environmental Public Affairs/SitePages/AF%20Response%20to%20PFOS-PFOA.aspx](https://cs1.eis.af.mil/sites/edash-workspaces/Environmental%20Public%20Affairs/SitePages/AF%20Response%20to%20PFOS-PFOA.aspx)

7. CORE MESSAGES*

- Although PFOS/PFOA are unregulated and commonly used, the Air Force is taking aggressive measures to reduce the risk of mission-related PFOS/PFOA contamination to installation and supporting communities' drinking water sources.
- The Air Force goal is to protect human health and ensure mission activities do not impact installation and supporting communities' access to safe drinking water.



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- The Air Force is using a comprehensive approach – identify, respond, prevent – to assess the potential for PFOS/PFOA contamination of drinking water, on and off installations, and respond appropriately.
- The Air Force 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.

*For full Talking Points, reference Communication Toolkit (Appendix A).

8. ASSUMPTIONS

This plan operates under the assumptions that:

- Installations have resources to dedicate to suggested PA best practices such as stakeholder work groups and public meetings.
- Site inspections and AFFF replacement and disposal continue as projected.
- Strong internal AF communication exists between installation, AFCEC and other internal stakeholders.
- AF spokespersons have current information on:
 - EPA advisory and or regulatory cleanup standards
 - AF AFFF use and disposal plans
 - Science of PFOS/PFOA health impacts
 - Results of local site inspections
 - Results of local drinking water sampling

9. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- SAF/IEE will serve as the lead for all PFOS/PFOA actions; approval authority for programmatic communications; advises on local issue communication.
- SAF/PA will distribute PFOS/PFOA public affairs guidance and associated toolkit; responsible for proactively engaging national media; and identifying potential national media coverage.
- AFCEC/PA will serve as PFOS/PFOA PA lead, coordinating PA activities between SAF/IE, SAF/PA, AFMSA (SG/PA), and installation PA offices.
- AFCEC/PA will synchronize AF messaging and advise communication best practices for PFOS/PFOA.
- AFCEC/PA will maintain public webpage to include community updates, FAQs, fact sheets, site investigation schedules, press kit and other helpful information (<http://www.afcec.af.mil/environment/perfluorinatedcompounds/index.asp>)
- AFCEC/PA will actively seek success stories to promote AF response to PFOS/PFOA.
- AFCEC BECs and RPMs will use established messaging and reach out to AFCEC/PA for additional support as needed. Will also integrate PFOS/PFOA messaging and recommendations with existing installation community relations plans and community involvement programs.
- AFCEC and/or installation PA offices will participate in community outreach events to include information sessions, public meetings, town halls, neighborhood association meetings, and other opportunities to be determined. SAF/PA may participate depending on the level of coverage.
- AFMSA (SG/PA) will coordinate AF drinking water sampling and results and advise communication best practices for internal and external stakeholders.



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- AFMSA (SG/PA) will continue to synchronize communication efforts with Base Environmental Engineer (BEE) and AFCEC.
- AFMSA (SG/PA) will provide templates for drinking water advisory notice and news release when sample results are confirmed below health advisory levels.
- AFMSA (SG/PA) will coordinate responses with Base Environmental Engineers (BEE) if results are determined above health advisory levels. Coordinate with SAF/PA and AFCEC/PA. Installation PA will coordinate PFOS/PFOA-related PA activities with AFCEC/PA.
- Installation PA offices will use established messaging and tailor communication efforts and toolkit products to their installation's requirements, reaching out to AFCEC/PA for additional support as needed and notify SAF/PA of potential national media coverage.
- Installation PA offices will inform AFCEC/PA of success stories and lessons learned to continue building on and improving existing toolkit.

10. POLICY & REFERENCES

- DODI 4715.06, Environmental Compliance in the United States, 4 May 2015
<https://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/471506p.pdf>
- DODI 4715.08, Remediation of Environmental Contamination Outside the United States, 1 Nov 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>
- AFI 35-101, Public Affairs Responsibilities and Management
http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/saf_pa/publication/afi35-101/afi35-101.pdf
- AFI 35-108, Environmental Public Affairs
http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/saf_pa/publication/afi35-108/afi35-108.pdf
- AFI 32-7020, The Environmental Restoration Program
http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a4/publication/afi32-7020/afi32-7020.pdf
- AFI 32-7061, The Environmental Impact Analysis Process
http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a4_7/publication/afi32-7061/afi32-7061.pdf
- AFI 32-7063, Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Program
http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a4/publication/afi32-7063/afi32-7063.pdf
- Resource Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA), 1976
<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-07/documents/rom.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>
- National Contingency Plan (NCP)
<https://www.epa.gov/emergency-response/national-oil-and-hazardous-substances-pollution-contingency-plan-ncp-overview>
- Air Force Drinking Water Implementation Guidance, 2016
[https://cs1.eis.af.mil/sites/edash-workspaces/Environmental_Public_Affairs/PFC%20Document%20Library/PFC%20Policy/DW%20Testing%20Implementation%20Guidance%20-%20Final%20\(11%20Oct%202016\).pdf](https://cs1.eis.af.mil/sites/edash-workspaces/Environmental_Public_Affairs/PFC%20Document%20Library/PFC%20Policy/DW%20Testing%20Implementation%20Guidance%20-%20Final%20(11%20Oct%202016).pdf)



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- Public Affairs Toolbox and other communication resources for the Air Force's response to PFOS/PFOA:
https://cs1.eis.af.mil/sites/edash-workspaces/Environmental_Public_Affairs/SitePages/AF%20Response%20to%20PFCs.aspx

11. POINTS OF CONTACT

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APPENDIX A: AIR FORCE RESPONSE TO PFOS/PFOA TOOLKIT		
Name	Product	Intent
PFOS/PFOA Talking Points	PFOS/PFOA Talking Points eDash Link	Handout of consolidated Talking Points support spokesmen engagement preparation.
PFOS/PFOA FAQs	PFOS/PFOA FAQs eDash Link	Frequently asked questions and responses regarding AF response to PFOS/PFOA.
AFFF FAQ	AFFF FAQs eDash Link	Frequently asked questions and responses regarding AF disposal, replacement, containment and operational use of legacy and replacement AFFF.
PFOS/PFOA Fact Sheet	PFOS/PFOA Fact Sheet eDash Link	Provides background and outlines AF response to PFOS/PFOA and AFFF replacement.
Fact Sheet: ATSDR Perfluoroalkyls	Fact Sheet: ATSDR Perfluoroalkyls eDash Link	Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry: Perfluoroalkyls
EPA PFOS/PFOA Health Advisories	EPA PFOS/PFOA Health Advisories eDash Link	Environmental Protection Agency: PFOS/PFOA Health Advisories



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