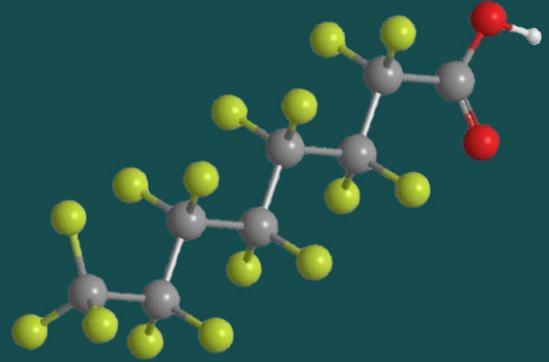


# THE PROBLEM WITH PFAS



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy



## THE PROBLEM:

- PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), otherwise known as “Forever Chemicals,” have been produced and released into the environment for decades. These synthetic chemicals enter the human body and cause a battery of serious health complications. Despite the known risks to human health and the environment, little has been done to address this problem.
- PFAS are extremely soluble and mobile in the environment (within soils and water) and enter the human body through multiple pathways (drinking water, fish tissue, etc.). Ingesting PFAS has been linked to reproductive issues, developmental delays in children and infants, and increased risk of cancers ([EPA](#)).
- PFAS are commonly found in the soil and groundwater near airports and military bases because products containing PFAS have commonly been used at these sites for training purposes.
- Firefighters face an increased risk of PFAS exposure through the use of AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foam), an agent used to distinguish fires that contain PFAS. The consequences of the long term and repeated exposure to PFAS from these sources is a health concern for firefighters and has not been sufficiently studied.
- Several legislative loopholes have been leveraged by chemical manufactures to allow the continued production and use of these chemicals.
- There is currently no Maximum Contaminant Level set by the EPA for PFAS in drinking water.

## BACKGROUND:

- 3M, headquartered in Maplewood, is a major producer of consumer and industrial products containing PFAS. It recently disclosed that it has long-known about the adverse health effects of these chemicals, and how it has done little to remediate this growing problem.
- In October 2021, the Biden administration announced plans to regulate PFAS. This multi-year long strategy includes addressing PFAS in drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The Biden Administration also intends to designate PFAS as a hazardous substance under the Superfund law. This would allow EPA to issue cleanup responsibilities and costs to the party responsible for the pollution.
- The [EPA also included plans](#) to require chemical manufacturers to test and report PFAS in household items that are an increasing public health concern.

## MINNESOTANS DESERVE A STRONG RESPONSE TO PFAS CONTAMINATION

- Firefighters deserve protections against PFAS in AFFF that can be harmful to their health.
  - A 2019 white paper from [IPEN \(International Pollutants Elimination Network\)](#) describes the contamination and risks to firefighters through the use, handling, and disposal of AFFF and PFAS products;
  - Michigan initiated disposal and collection efforts as a result of these studies to halt the use of products containing PFAS.
- A lack of information about what products contain PFAS is detrimental to public health and adds risk to sensitive populations, like mothers, pregnant women, infants, and small children. Disclosing when a product contains PFAS allows consumers to purchase safer alternatives.
- Regulating the manufacture, use, and disposal of these forever chemicals requires immediate legislative action to protect all Minnesotans and the health of the environment.
- Communities near landfills, airports, and chemical manufacturing facilities suffer greater risk from PFAS contamination.

### For more information:

- **EPA PFAS strategy:**  
[https://www.startribune.com/epa-unveils-strategy-to-regulate-toxic-forever-chemicals/600107660/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=talkers](https://www.startribune.com/epa-unveils-strategy-to-regulate-toxic-forever-chemicals/600107660/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=talkers)
- **What is MN doing about PFAS?:** <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/what-minnesota-doing-about-pfas>
- **Firefighters and AFFF:**  
<https://www.firerescue1.com/firefighting-foam/articles/forever-chemicals-what-firefighters-need-to-know-about-aff-and-pfas-8pdsKB4G2G1fJoIM/>

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