

PFAS Frequently Asked Questions

What is PFAS?

Per and Poly Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are a class of thousands of man-made chemicals that have been manufactured and used in a variety of commercial products since the 1940s. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), these chemicals are very persistent in the environment and in the human body – meaning they do not break down and they can accumulate over time.

What types of products have PFAS?

PFAS has been used in the production of non-stick cookware, carpets, clothing, fabrics for furniture, cosmetics, paper packaging for food, and other materials that are resistant to water, grease, or stains. They are also used in aqueous firefighting foam and in several other industrial processes. Because these chemicals have been used in such a wide array of consumer products, nearly all people have been exposed to them.

PFAS in Drinking Water

PFAS may be found in drinking water sources as a result of intentional or unintentional spills, discharges from septic systems or wastewater treatment plants, use of firefighting foam, or by other methods. PFAS in drinking water is always the result of human activity and contamination.

How much is too much PFAS in drinking water?

The US EPA is proposing a National Primary Drinking Water Regulation to establish legally enforceable levels, called Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs), for six PFAS known to occur in drinking water. The six PFAS are **PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and GenX Chemicals**. An MCL protects public health by setting a maximum level of a contaminant allowed in drinking water which can be delivered to users of a public water system.

Additionally, EPA is proposing health-based, non-enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLGs) for these six PFAS. An MCLG is the maximum level of a contaminant in drinking water where there is no known or anticipated negative effect on an individual's health, allowing for a margin of safety.

The MCL's and MCLG's that EPA has proposed for the six PFAS compounds known to occur in drinking water are shown in the table below:

PFAS Compound	MCL's	MCLG's
PFOA	4.0 ppt	0.004
PFOS	4.0 ppt	0.02
GenX Chemicals	1.0 combined hazard index	
PFBS	1.0 combined hazard index	
PFNA	1.0 combined hazard index	
PFHxS	1.0 combined hazard index	

Is there PFAS in Hardy County Public Service District's water?

PFAS was detected in only one of Hardy County PSD's water systems, that being the Baker Public Water System. Test results released by USGS on May 4, 2023 show that one PFAS compound, PFOA, was detected in the Baker Public Water System at a level of 2.44 parts per trillion (ppt.) This level of PFOA does not exceed the EPA's proposed level allowed in drinking water (MCL) but does exceed the level where there are no known negative health effects (MCLG.) PFOA was the only PFAS compound detected during testing of the Baker Public Water System.

Why is there PFAS in our drinking water?

The Parker Hollow Impoundment is the sole water source for the Baker Public Water System and PFAS compounds have been detected in the water in the Impoundment. Water containing PFAS from the Impoundment is being used to produce drinking water for the Baker Public Water System. The cause of PFAS contamination in the Parker Hollow Impoundment is currently unknown. However, this contamination illustrates the continuing need to protect sources of drinking water from human activity that might cause contamination.

What is Hardy County PSD doing to reduce PFAS levels in drinking water?

While there are no immediate actions that can be taken to reduce the levels of PFAS in drinking water, Hardy County PSD has begun the process of working with consulting engineers to evaluate treatment options for reducing PFAS levels. PSD staff is also working with the developers of treatment operations utilized at the Baker Water Treatment Plant to determine if variations in treatments methods can assist in the removal of PFAS compounds.

What do I need to do?

If you would like to reduce your exposure to PFAS in drinking water, you may consider installing a point of use treatment system in your home. Make sure to select a system that is certified to remove PFAS and follow the manufacturer's instructions for maintenance and/or replacement.

For More Information

More information about PFAS in drinking water can be found on the US Environmental Protection Agency's website at: www.epa.gov/pfas.