

THE PROBLEM

- PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), otherwise known as “Forever Chemicals,” are synthetic chemicals that can resist heat, grease, and water. They have been used in consumer and industrial products such as water-resistant fabrics, cleaning products, and nonstick cookware since the 1950s. Despite the known risk to human health and the environment, little has been done to address the problem.
- Ingesting PFAS has been linked to reproductive issues, developmental delays in children and infants, increased risk of cancer, and other health effects. ([EPA](#), [DNR](#))
- PFAS are extremely soluble and mobile in soils and water and can enter the human body through multiple pathways (drinking water, eating fish, etc.). Most people now have PFAS in their blood.
- Firefighters face an [increased risk of PFAS exposure](#) through the use of AFFF (aqueous film forming foam), an agent used to extinguish fires. The consequences of the long term and repeated exposure to PFAS from these sources are a health concern for firefighters and have not been sufficiently studied.
- PFAS are commonly found in the soil and groundwater near airports and military bases because AFFF has commonly been used at these sites for training purposes.
- [Drinking water tests](#) across public water supplied in Iowa found PFAS in 41 percent of samples. Only 12 percent of samples were above the Health Advisory set by EPA.
- DNR found PFAS in more than 90 percent of lakes and rivers, as well as 32 percent of groundwater used for public water supplies.

FEDERAL ACTIONS

- EPA has set Health Advisory levels to protect against long-term health consequences for several specific chemicals (PFOA, PFOS, PFBS) and a class of PFAS chemicals (GenX chemicals). The safe levels are below the concentration labs can currently evaluate using existing methods.
- In October 2021, EPA [announced plans](#) to regulate PFAS. This multi-year strategy includes addressing PFAS in drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The EPA also intends to designate PFAS as a hazardous substance under the Superfund law. This would allow EPA to assign cleanup responsibilities and costs to the party responsible for the pollution.
- On March 29, 2023, EPA proposed a rule to set an enforceable drinking water standard (Maximum Contaminant Level) for PFOA and PFOS, as well as a cumulative hazard index for four other chemicals. The standards are at the minimum levels that labs can detect using current technology:

Substance	Proposed MCL	Health Advisory
PFOA	4 ng/L	
PFOS	4 ng/L	
PFNA	1.0 Hazard Index	10 ng/L
PFHxS		9 ng/L
PFBS		2000 ng/L
GenX Chemicals		10 ng/L

IOWA ACTIONS

- Iowa DNR released a high-level [PFAS Action Plan](#) in 2020 focused on identifying sources of PFAS, increasing monitoring efforts, promoting pollution prevention, and education.
- In 2023, Iowa DNR has the identified water supplies most likely to be susceptible to PFAS contamination and made testing results [available online](#).



Iowa DNR maintains an [interactive map](#) of PFAS sampling results from public water supplies.

IOWANS DESERVE A STRONG RESPONSE TO PFAS CONTAMINATION

- Not having information about what products contain PFAS risks public health, particularly for 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 Iowans and the health of the environment.
- Communities near landfills, airports, and chemical manufacturing facilities face greater risk of PFAS contamination.
- Firefighters deserve protections against PFAS in AFFF that can be harmful to their health
- 3M has [agreed to pay](#) for new drinking water wells for the town of Camanche, Iowa, along with private water treatment systems, because a 3M facility in Illinois was identified as a likely source of PFAS contamination.

For more information

- Iowa DNR [PFAS Action Plan](#)
- [Iowa DNR Summary of PFAS Testing of Iowa Public Water Supplies](#)
- [EPA PFAS strategy](#)
- [Firefighters and AFFF](#)
- History and Use of PFAS in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)

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