



Maine CDC Drinking Water Program PFAS FAQs

Questions and Answers for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in Drinking Water

Section 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What are PFAS? How are we exposed to them?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are man-made chemicals that have been widely used since the 1940s in consumer products and industrial applications. Due to their widespread use and persistence in the environment, most people in the United States have been exposed to some level of PFAS. Food has been packaged in materials and processed with equipment that uses PFAS. Household products such as stain- and water-resistant fabrics (like clothes, towels, or sheets), along with carpeting, non-stick cookware, cleaning products and paints, all contained PFAS. Even workplaces like production facilities and industrial settings have used PFAS in their day to day operations. Class B Firefighting foam (AFFF) foam is made with PFOA and PFOS due to their extreme effectiveness at quickly extinguishing petroleum-based fires.

The highest exposure comes from the above consumer products, however drinking water can be an extra source of exposure if contamination has occurred.

2. What are exposure health effects?

Exposure through human consumption of contaminated drinking water or food may cause direct negative health effects. The degree of risk depends on the level of chemicals and duration of exposure. Laboratory studies of animals exposed to high doses of PFAS have shown numerous negative effects such as: issues with reproduction, growth and development, thyroid function, immune system, neurology, as well as injury to the liver. Research is still relatively new, and more needs to be done to fully assess exposure effects on the human body.

Section 2. NEW PFAS LEGISLATION (SAMPLING, LABORATORIES, RESULTS)

1. What is the new PFAS legislation in Maine? Where can I find legislation text?

With the passage of SP 64 (Resolve, To Protect Consumers of Public Drinking Water by Establishing Maximum Contaminant Levels for Certain Substances and Contaminants), the Maine legislature has mandated that Public Water Systems that are either community water systems (CWS) or non-transient, non-community (NTNC) schools and child care facilities sample their finished drinking water for PFAS.

The legislation text can be accessed here:

<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0064&item=3&num=130>

2. What is the deadline for sampling finished drinking water?

All community public water systems, and non-transient, non-community (NTNC) schools and childcare facilities must sample finished drinking water (entry point sample after all treatment) for PFAS by **December 31, 2022**. Results must be reported to the Drinking Water Program. There will also be on-going PFAS sampling for systems with detections.

3. What does "finished drinking water" mean? After treatment before distribution w/ all sources on? A couple of sources on?

Sampling should be conducted at all entry points (after any treatment) to the distribution system, but sampling is not initially required at every well or raw water source. Wells will only get sampled should your entry point samples come back over the interim standard of 20 PPT. If a system currently collects multiple samples at one treatment plant or entry point due to alternating pumping scenarios, the same should be done for PFAS sampling. If not, the most common pumping scenario can be utilized during sampling if that is predominant.

4. What PFAS contaminants are now regulated? What is the current drinking water standard for PFAS in drinking water in Maine?

The six regulated PFAS contaminants are: perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), perfluoroheptanoic acid (PFHpA) and perfluorodecanoic acid (PFDA). An interim standard of 20 parts per trillion (PPT) for the six PFAS (alone or in combination) is immediately in effect. A rule-making process is currently taking place in order to establish PFAS Maximum Contaminant Levels in Maine.

5. How many parts per trillion is a detection? Does this apply to any of the regulated six contaminants or the sum of the six analytes of PFAS?

A detection is any level of a PFAS6 compound above the laboratory reporting limit or laboratory detection limit. All analyses need to use a method reporting limit of 2 PPT for the approved analytical methods. This applies to any (alone or in combination) of the regulated 6 PFAS analytes.

6. Is there sampling guidance available?

The sampling procedure is complicated and has a high chance of producing false positives. Please review the Drinking Water Program's (DWP) [sampling guidance document](#) on our [PFAS webpage](#) or consider taking a class through Maine Rural Water Association (MRWA) before sampling. You may also contact MRWA for PFAS sampling assistance. Please reach out to pfasassistance@mainerwa.org for more information.

7. Where can I get my water tested for PFAS?

Only DWP accredited laboratories using EPA methods 533, 537 and 537.1 may be used to test for PFAS in water. The current list of [Maine accredited labs for PFAS testing](#) can be found on DWP's Required Testing for PFAS in Drinking Water webpage under the Additional Resources section. You can also find accredited labs on [Maine Laboratory Accreditation webpage](#). On this page, systems can select the "All Accredited Laboratories" link to see the methods/analytes/programs to be selected for testing.

For more information on labs and analytical methods, please contact Christine Blais by email at Christine.Blais@maine.gov.

8. What parameters need to be analyzed and reported to the DWP? Do I just report the regulated PFAS6 contaminants?

The laboratory needs to analyze and report all parameters (the full contaminant list) in the chosen EPA method, not just the regulated six PFAS contaminants.

It is recommended that you discuss the different EPA methods and their corresponding price points with your lab prior to analysis.

9. Can I use a laboratory that is not on the accredited lab list for PFAS analysis, who will subcontract the PFAS analysis to a lab that is accredited for PFAS analysis?

Yes. A system may choose to use a Maine lab that is not accredited for PFAS analysis for the convenience of their drop-off locations/courier and/or a sense of familiarity, as long as it is a Maine-accredited lab that subcontracts to another lab that is Maine-accredited for PFAS analysis (i.e., on the Maine laboratory accreditation list). This applies to all labs accredited by the DWP across the country. The lab issuing the report must be accredited by the Maine Laboratory Accreditation Program (MLAP) and must indicate which tests were subcontracted. The MLAP cannot accredit a laboratory for a test they aren't directly performing. There's also always the option for a system to communicate directly with the PFAS-accredited lab of their choice.

10. Does a field blank need to be collected at each sample site? Do all field blanks need to be analyzed by the lab?

Yes, a field blank must be taken with each sample set, which means samples that are taken at the same site at the same time. If there are several sampling ports or wells in the same building or vicinity, then only one field blank is needed. A good rule of thumb is that if you have to drive to separate sample sites, a field blank is needed for each individual site. Make sure that you fill all the bottles provided as instructed by lab.

Field blanks only need to be analyzed when a sample is over the reporting limit for PFAS. Discuss this with your lab prior to analysis, as some labs will run and charge you for field blanks regardless of whether there are reportable levels of PFAS.

11. I have previously sampled my water for PFAS, do I need to sample again?

Yes. Systems who have tested for PFAS prior to June 21, 2021 are still required to re-test their water under this new legislation.

12. I am a consecutive public water system, do I still need to sample my water?

Yes, consecutive public water systems need to test for PFAS at least once. This sample can be taken at a regular distribution system sampling location. Rules are still being developed regarding repeat testing for consecutive systems should there be a PFAS hit above the interim standard of 20 PPT at the parent system or the consecutive system.

13. I am a school or childcare facility that is on municipal water. Do I need to sample for PFAS?

No, you do not need to test your finished water for PFAS. Only Public Water Systems that are a Community Water System (CWS) or Non-transient, Non-community (NTNC) schools and/or childcare facilities must sample for PFAS under this regulation.

14. What do I do if there is PFAS in my drinking water above Maine’s drinking water standard?

If you have detections of 20 PPT, you must provide a public notice to your customers within 30 days and will go on a quarterly sampling schedule. The DWP may modify this based on data results.

Treatment or other remedies must take place if the interim standard is exceeded. Immediate treatment may not be possible if shutting off high sources or blending water to achieve compliance are not available solutions. If water >20 PPT must be supplied to the public for a period of time, that will be explained in the PN, along with expected timeframes for achieving compliance through treatment or an alternate source.

15. How long after a detection does a system have before needing to report it to the DWP and customers?

All initial PFAS results should be reported to the DWP within 10 days of their receipt. If levels are greater than 20 PPT, Public Notification must be issued to the customer within 30 days of receipt. If ongoing monitoring is required on a quarterly or annual frequency due to the presence of detectable levels of PFAS in the initial sample, these results must be submitted by the 10th of the month following the month that the samples were required to be taken.

16. How do you report PFAS detections over 20 PPT to the customer?

The DWP is currently developing a standard form that public water systems can use to send to customers. This form will be a Public Notice, similar to the PNs currently being used for other contaminant exceedances. Acceptable methods will be the same as a Tier 2 Public Notice. Community systems would be able to use direct delivery/ mailing, and then additional options like newspaper, other media, postings, etc. Non-Community systems can do direct delivery/ mailing or postings.

17. Do I (or my lab) still need to submit results if there are no detects?

Yes. Result submissions are necessary regardless of whether there are detects or not. This is so the Program can verify that you have completed the sampling requirement.

18. Does the lab or the system submit the lab results to the Drinking Water Program?

Labs should be submitting results directly to the DWP, however if this is not the case for you, you may submit your results directly to the Program by email to dwplabsubmit@maine.gov.

19. Do PFAS numbers need to be included on Consumer Confidence Reports?

Yes, they need to be reported on Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs).

Section 3. OTHER QUESTIONS RELATING TO PFAS

1. I would like to test my private well for PFAS, how do I do this?

Please contact the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) at pfas.dep@maine.gov or call your local ME DEP office for further assistance with private well testing. Local DEP offices can be determined here: <https://www.maine.gov/dep/contact/mdepoffices.html>

2. Where can I get more information on PFAS?

- [Maine DWP Testing for PFAS in Drinking Water webpage](#)
- [Maine Drinking Water Program Homepage](#)
- [Maine CDC PFAS Fact Sheet](#)
- [Maine DEP PFAS Webpage](#)
- [EPA Basic Information on PFAS](#)