

Maine CDC Drinking Water Program: Status Update – December 2019

(12/4/2019)

Summary of Maine's Efforts to Address PFAS in 2019

As many of you know, there has been a lot of attention on a set of chemical compounds known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water, wastewater and the environment. Because so many messages from numerous sources have been flying around, I'd like to provide you with a clear summary of the Drinking Water Program's current understanding of this issue and what may be on the horizon in terms of drinking water regulations.

What is the State of Maine doing to address PFAS?

On March 6, 2019, Governor Janet Mills signed an executive order establishing Maine's PFAS Task Force to:

- Identify the extent of PFAS exposure in Maine;
- Examine the risks of PFAS to Maine residents and the environment; and
- Recommend State approaches to most effectively address PFAS in Maine.

The Task Force began meeting monthly in April and will submit a report to the Governor with recommendations for future actions to address PFAS in Maine by December 31st.

Who is on the PFAS Task Force?

The Task Force consists of members from several state agencies along with representatives from the drinking water and wastewater industry, biosolids management professionals, the pulp and paper industry, the Maine Public Health Association, and the Environmental Health Strategy Center. Drinking Water Program doesn't have a seat per se on the Task Force, but we are represented through the position occupied by DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew. Along with the State Toxicologist, DWP has provided information to the PFAS Task Force to help with their discussions and decision making.

How much PFAS testing has been done at Maine's public water systems?

DWP's primary role has been to report on PFAS levels detected in Maine drinking water based on information gathered through EPA's 2013-2015 sampling round and two voluntary sampling rounds coordinated by DWP in 2017 and 2019. These programs were part of a data gathering effort to help evaluate the presence of PFAS in Maine's public water systems to inform future decisions on possible regulation of these chemicals as drinking water contaminants. The combined sampling efforts have resulted in analysis of drinking water samples for PFAS in a total of 53 public water systems in Maine, mostly Community Water Systems. These systems represent more than 65% of the population served by Community Water Systems.

What do we know about PFAS in Maine drinking water?

The current EPA Health Advisory for drinking water is a combined concentration of 70 ppt for two PFAS compounds, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluoro octane sulfonate (PFOS). To date, only one public water supply was found to have combined PFOA and PFOS above the health advisory of 70 ppt. This is a small community system in Houlton, Maine (Houlton Mobile Home Park) serving approximately 140 people. This system is currently providing bottled water to their customers while considering installation of a treatment system and/or replacement of the water source. In addition, one public water supply in southern Maine (Kennebunk, Kennebunkport & Wells Water District) serving a population of approximately 34,250 elected to install a treatment system for PFAS in one of their well sources, although PFAS levels in the well did not exceed 70 ppt.

Does Maine have a PFAS problem?

Based on PFAS sampling in Maine's public water systems to date, PFAS does not appear to be present in most public drinking water. Where detected, PFAS levels tend to be very low (i.e., well below EPA's Health Advisory), with a couple of exceptions as noted above. Considering that all the systems included in the State-coordinated sampling programs were selected due to their proximity to potential sources of PFAS contamination, these results indicate that Maine does not have widespread PFAS contamination of public drinking water. However, since PFAS is present in many consumer products, waste streams, and industrial processes, we cannot be certain if an individual drinking water supply contains PFAS until we test.

What is next for PFAS regulation in Maine?

The Task Force will likely recommend a requirement for all Community systems to test for PFAS. This would require action by the Maine Legislature to enact new laws requiring Community Water Systems to test for PFAS at specified intervals in addition to their regular monitoring requirements under the Safe Drinking Water Act. DWP will continue to recommend that public water systems use EPA's Health Advisory to guide decision making on treatment and public notification when PFAS is detected, until the point in time when EPA's Health Advisory may be superseded by new MCLs established at the federal level. In addition to representation on the PFAS Task Force, the drinking water industry will have the opportunity to weigh in during the legislative process to help ensure that any future regulatory requirements are fair and consistent with everyone's desire to protect public health in a way that is not overly burdensome to public water systems.

Where can I find more information?

To view updates from the PFAS Task Force, including draft recommendations and reports, please visit the following link:

<https://www.maine.gov/pfastaskforce/>



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
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Drinking Water Program

