

## There's a national focus on drinking water quality



June 15, 2022

Henderson Water is in the business of public health and our drinking water is safe, high-quality and meets all regulatory standards. Today, the EPA issued new health advisory levels to manage the risk for a group of man-made chemicals in drinking water called PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances).

We want to explain where we stand as a water utility.

---

### First, what are PFAS compounds?

Since the 1940s, PFAS compounds have been widely used in the manufacturing of carpets, clothing, fabrics for furniture, paper packaging for food and other materials. They are also used for firefighting and in industrial processes. The EPA says most people are exposed to these chemicals through consumer products. Drinking water can be an additional source of exposure in communities where these chemicals have entered the water supplies.

EPA regulates the safe levels for hundreds of compounds in drinking water. Currently, there is no federal regulation for PFAS. Many water utilities, including our scientists at Henderson Water are conducting research to determine the levels of PFAS in our water and how well various treatment options can reduce levels.

PFAS are a large family of compounds, up to 5,000 chemicals. EPA is focused on a small number of these compounds that may have health effects at very low concentrations, two of which are Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS).

The EPA says most uses of PFOA and PFOS were voluntarily phased out by U.S. manufacturers in the mid-2000s. There are a limited number of ongoing uses, and these chemicals remain in the environment due to their persistence and the inability to degrade.

---

## **What is the EPA's Health Advisory Level and what does it mean?**

It can be a lengthy process to set drinking water regulations. With science, there's no such thing as zero, so research is important to determine an acceptable risk level for public health. A health advisory level is commonly a first step in EPA developing a regulation.

Today the EPA set new Interim Health Advisory Levels for PFOA at 0.004 parts per trillion and 0.02 parts per trillion for PFOS. These are microscopic levels, trace amounts. For perspective, 1 part per trillion is equal to 1 drop in 500,000 barrels of water. These new health advisories are also below current reliable detection abilities of scientific equipment (Scientists can currently detect PFAS compounds at 2 parts per trillion.)

Health advisories are not enforceable like regulations. Instead, the advisories are interim guidance before EPA develops a formal regulation. The health advisory level is the minimum concentration of a compound which may present health risks to an individual over a lifetime of exposure. Because there is uncertainty of the health effects associated with long-term exposure to compounds, EPA sets lower health advisories. Sometimes, the advisory is lower than current analytical methods can detect.

EPA first issued a health advisory level for PFOA and PFOS in 2016 at 70 parts per trillion. Because of further research and as EPA determines its regulatory approach, it has created a lower health advisory.

### **What are the levels in Henderson's drinking water?**

Henderson Water samples our source water and the treated drinking water leaving the treatment plant. Henderson Water does quarterly monitoring for PFAS. Our most current monitoring results for PFOA and PFOS show the following averages:

---

### **Henderson North Water Treatment Plant**

PFAS Compound	Henderson Water Monitoring Latest Result	EPA Health Advisory Level
PFOA	2.5 parts per trillion	.004 parts per trillion
PFOS	Non-detectable	.02 parts per trillion

---

The other PFAS compounds for which EPA issued health advisory levels include hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid (HFPO-DA), otherwise known as "GenX," and Perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS). Our monitoring results indicate levels that are well below the health advisory levels:

PFAS Compound	Henderson Water Monitoring Averages	EPA Health Advisory Level
GenX	Non-detectable	10 parts per trillion
PFBS	Non-detectable	2,000 parts per trillion

### **What is Henderson Water doing about PFAS?**

We recognize the average level of PFOA in our monitoring is above the EPA's new health advisory levels. Research and monitoring is a priority. We are continuing to do both of these by:

- Determining the levels of PFAS in our water with additional monitoring and identifying any patterns
- Understanding established and emerging treatment options
- Developing practical and feasible strategies to reduce levels of PFAS as EPA develops and finalizes its future drinking water standards.

The lower the level, the lower the risk and as always, public health and the quality of your drinking water is our top priority.

Ask a question or reach out with a concern. We are always available to talk about how we produce and deliver your drinking water and the steps we take to maintain quality.