

ENSURING THE CONTINUED DELIVERY OF SAFE, RELIABLE WATER

You have likely heard the term PFAS with the recent increased focus on regulating this family of chemicals. But what exactly are PFAS and what steps are Metro Water District taking to ensure your water continues to be safe to drink?

What are PFAS?

PFAS stands for perfluoroalkyl or polyfluoroalkyl substances. They are manmade chemicals that were used in items like nonstick cookware, water-repellent clothing, stain-resistant fabrics and carpets, and firefighting foams. The two most widely used PFAS chemicals were PFOA (Perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid). After potential health effects associated with PFOA and PFOS were identified, the use of these chemicals was phased out and replaced with other chemicals, such as GenX, that have also been identified to cause potential health impacts. Unfortunately, these chemicals do not readily break down and persist in the environment, especially water.



Metro Water District's South Shannon Treatment System (pictured above) pumps water through two vessels filled with granular activated carbon (GAC) which is effective at removing PFAS. ♡

Has the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulated or set Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for PFOA, PFOS, and GenX chemicals?

PFOA, PFOS, and GenX chemicals are not presently regulated by Arizona or any Federal Agencies.

In December 2016, EPA published an interim health advisory for PFOA and PFOS at a combined 70 parts per trillion (ppt). Note that one ppt is the equivalent to 1 grain of sand in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

A health advisory means that a constituent is anticipated to cause health effects above a certain level and health advisories are published in advance of regulated standards. At the District, we ensure compliance with all drinking water standards, and our goal is to also treat water to below published health advisory levels whenever possible.

On June 15, 2022, EPA updated the health advisories, substantially lowering levels for PFOA to 0.004 ppt and PFOS to 0.02 ppt, over 1000 times lower than the previous health advisory levels. These new health advisories are considered interim as EPA continues to study the long-term effects of these chemicals. EPA's update also included a new health advisory for GenX chemicals at 10 ppt.

While the health advisories have been lowered by EPA, water quality laboratories performing these tests are not capable of detecting concentrations that low. To ensure reliability in results, EPA established a minimum reporting level (MRL) for each of the chemicals which is the concentration that labs can confidently detect these chemicals using currently available technology. EPA-established MRLs are 4 ppt for both PFOA and PFOS.

Does the District have any wells that are above the Health Advisory Levels?

In Metro Main, one well had levels above the 2016 health advisory for PFOS and/or PFOA and five other wells had detections, but were below the health advisory levels. These wells in Metro Main include:

- The well that had detections above the health advisory level but has been taken offline and has not produced water for customers since 2016
- A well that was used only for irrigation, and not in the public water system, and has since been sold to Pima County for their irrigation needs
- A well that has not been in service since 2017 and has since been sold to Pima County for their irrigation needs
- A well that already has a treatment system, which removes PFAS to below detection limits
- A well that is on standby and is only operated if needed to meet peak demand
- A well that is below the health advisory and is also blended with two additional wells to further reduce the concentration.

No wells in any of the District's other service areas had detections above the health advisory level. As you can see, none of these wells delivered water to you that was above the 2016 health advisory level for PFOS/PFOA.

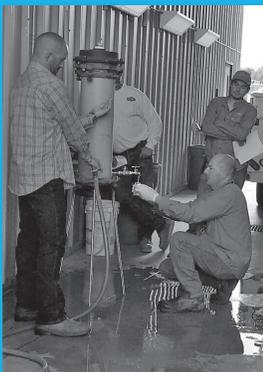
To ensure compliance with the new health advisory levels, the District tested every production well in each service area for PFOA and PFOS and continues to test those wells that had detections. Testing is ongoing for GenX with none of the wells tested showing any detections for that constituent. Other than the well which has been offline since 2016, no wells were found to have levels above the MRL for PFOA and PFOS.

What Are the Next Steps?

The District's mission is "to deliver safe, reliable water to our customers." Ensuring compliance with water quality regulations, to include health advisories, is a fundamental element of our mission. We will continue to closely monitor EPA's actions on PFAS as it is anticipated that a regulated standard for PFOA/PFOS will be published in the near future. We are also

continuing to collect elective samples of all active District wells to ensure that we are able to detect any changes in concentration levels for these chemicals. We have begun exploring the installation of treatment processes at wells that are just below the MRL to ensure we are able to proactively deal with these chemicals.

We believe that customers who are well informed on their water supply are our best allies in supporting actions to ensure compliance with water quality standards. Should you have any questions about the District's proactive actions on PFAS, or any other water quality questions, please contact us at 520-575-8100. ♣



Trainings are regularly offered to provide staff with additional knowledge and to refresh previously learned skills. In the above picture, Ian Scrimshaw, Utility Technician III, demonstrates the proper techniques involved in water quality sampling. ♣



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Board Meetings
are held at 6265 N. La
Cañada Drive the second
Monday of each month.
If it falls on a holiday,
the meeting is moved
to Wednesday and
starts at 6:00 p.m.

Mission
To deliver safe, reliable
water to our customers.