

PFAS Frequently Asked Questions

What is PFAS? PFAS (Perfluoroalkyl substances) is a "forever chemical" designed to be resistant to biological, chemical, and thermal breakdown. It is found in many products, such as non-stick pans, water repellent fabrics and application, microwave popcorn, pizza boxes and even some brands of dental floss. It is also found in firefighting foams used by some fire departments, and at all commercial service airports in the United States. Because PFAS is used in so many applications, most Americans have some level of PFAS in their bloodstreams.

Why is PFAS used at Airports? The FAA currently requires all fire departments at airport served by airlines to use Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) containing PFAS to extinguish aircraft fires. AFFF with PFAS is required by the FAA because it is extremely stable and does not react with other chemicals, including jet fuel. AFFF extinguishes fires by sequestering fuel sources from oxygen, thus preventing them from reignition.

Why is PFAS a problem? PFAS has not been classified by the EPA as a hazardous substance or a carcinogen. However, some studies have linked PFAS exposure to health issues. More studies are therefore underway. In the meantime, the EPA has issued a "health advisory" for PFAS, setting a *lifetime* limit of 70 ppt (parts per trillion) for drinking water.

What is being done regarding AFFF use at airports nationally? The FAA is currently looking into the certification of a firefighting foam that does not contain PFAS with a goal of 2021 to find a replacement. Until the FAA approves such a product, all US commercial service airports are legally required to have and use AFFF for aircraft firefighting.

What has been done at the JH Airport? JH Airport's fire department updated its training practices several years ago to eliminate active sprays of AFFF. Though periodic tests are still required by the FAA to determine the product's usefulness, AFFF is now contained during these tests, and not released into the environment.

In the event of a direct, fire-related life safety moment, AFFF would be deployed to save lives. However, JH Airport's procedures after an emergency event have also been updated to contain the spread of AFFF.

What more is being done at the JH Airport? JH Airport has worked with environmental consultants who are experts in PFAS to determine where PFAS exists on and off the Airport as a result of prior use of AFFF. We learned that PFAS does exist in some monitoring wells on the Airport and in domestic wells in areas surrounding the airport. We continue to work with the consultants to monitor off-Airport water wells and to determine next steps for PFAS mitigation and remediation.

Does my home water filtration system work for PFAS? Many household filters, such as sand and granular activated carbon (GAC) are only partially effective at removing PFAS from drinking water.

Will the Board purchase a water filter for my domestic water well? The Airport tested and found PFAS in some domestic water wells in the "Phase 1" neighborhood directly adjacent to the Airport. Only one well in this area tested above the EPA's advisory limit of 70 ppt - and that was at 70.3 ppt. Nonetheless, because this area is so close to the Airport, in an exercise of caution the Board offered to purchase, upon request, point-of-entry treatment (POET) water filters for all 45 residences in this area, regardless of the test results.

The Board then conducted Phase 2 and Phase 3 testing of domestic water wells located farther from the Airport. None of these wells tested at or near the EPA limit of 70 ppt. Nonetheless, the Board has decided that it will, upon request, purchase and pay for the installation of water filters within the area of expected PFAS presence at 10 ppt or greater.

Why did the Board choose a filtration installation threshold of 10 ppt? Though the current EPA advisory limit for PFAS in drinking water is 70ppt, and that standard is relied upon by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, several states have established lower standards. A threshold of 10 ppt mirrors the most stringent regulatory standard currently adopted by any jurisdiction in the United States. This option was the most proactive choice the Board could make for the community and the Airport.

Does the threshold set by Board include both PFOS and PFOA? Yes. The Board recommendation for a threshold accounts for 10 ppt threshold for PFOA, 10 ppt threshold for PFOS, and 10 ppt threshold for combined PFOA and PFOS.

Is it Possible the Board will have to re-visit the 10 ppt threshold limit in the future? Yes. Because the EPA has not yet classified PFOS/PFOA as a hazardous substance or identified a regulatory limit (as opposed to an “advisory” threshold), it may be necessary to reevaluate the Board’s 10 ppt threshold in the future if the EPA implements more stringent guidelines.

What is the “Allowance for Variability” when referring to the chosen threshold? Regardless of the threshold selected, the Airport’s environmental consultants, Mead & Hunt, recommend adding an “allowance for variability” to determine the wells eligible for filter installation. What this means is, if any portion of the associated property is expected to have PFAS in groundwater at the threshold level selected, the homeowner would receive an offer to have a filtration system installed.

EPA’s 70 ppt advisory limit is based on “lifetime” exposure to PFAS in drinking water. Is the Airport Board’s filter installation threshold of 10 ppt also based on lifetime exposure? EPA and state environmental protection agencies are regulatory bodies which set standards based on their evaluation of scientific data. The Airport Board is not a regulatory agency and has therefore not set any standard, based on lifetime exposure or otherwise. The Airport Board has simply selected a ppt threshold at which it will pay to have water filters installed on domestic wells adjacent to the Airport. However, the 10 ppt threshold is measured using the same methods as EPA’s 70 ppt advisory limit, so the threshold selected by the Airport Board is seven times more stringent than the EPA advisory limit.

Will the Airport continue to monitor wells that have already been tested? Yes. The Airport will continue to test monitoring wells both on- and off-airport over time. Based on a scientific approach for monitoring, up to 20 off-airport residential wells will be selected for future testing during wet and dry seasons for the next two years. Once it is determined where the best locations are for monitoring, homeowners who have participated in the Voluntary Testing Program will be contacted by the Airport to discuss their further participation as a monitoring site.

What’s next? In determining our next steps locally, JH Airport will maintain open communications with Wyoming DEQ, the Teton County Health Department, the FAA and other agencies to stay up to date with the latest information regarding a replacement for AFFF and changes to regulation.

Our number one priority at the JH Airport is the safety of our operations – both for passengers and

the surrounding community. Along with safety, we also make environmental stewardship a vital part of everything we do. Once the FAA greenlights a replacement for AFFF, we will be making that change as soon as possible.