

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

Deferral Issued for PFOA and PFOS at the Riverhead Water District

Why are you receiving this notice/information?

You are receiving this notice because testing of our public water system found the chemical perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) in your drinking water above New York State's maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 ppt for PFOS. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) was found in your drinking water at less than the MCL of 10 ppt. The MCLs are set well below levels known to cause health effects in animal studies. Therefore, consuming water with PFOA and PFOS at the level detected does not pose a significant health risk. Your water continues to be acceptable for all uses.

The Riverhead Water District has submitted, and the New York State Department of Health (Department) has issued, a deferral to the Riverhead Water District for PFOA and PFOS. When a public water system is issued a deferral, the water system agrees to a schedule for corrective action and compliance with the new MCLs. In exchange, the Department agrees to defer enforcement actions, such as assessing fines, if the water system is meeting the established deadlines. We are required to update the Department and the Suffolk County Department of Health each calendar quarter on the status of our projects. If we do not meet the agreed upon deadlines, the Department can resume enforcement.

What are the health effects of PFOS?

The available information on the health effects associated with PFOS, like many chemicals, comes from studies of high-level exposure in animals or humans. Less is known about the chances of health effects occurring from lower levels of exposure, such as those that might occur in drinking water. As a result, finding lower levels of chemicals in drinking water prompts water suppliers and regulators to take precautions that include notifying consumers and steps to reduce exposure.

PFOS has caused a wide range of health effects when studied in animals that were exposed to high levels. Additional studies of high-level exposures of PFOS in people provide evidence that some of the health effects seen in animals may also occur in humans. The most consistent findings in animals were effects on the liver and immune system and impaired fetal growth and development. The United States Environmental Protection Agency considers PFOS as having suggestive evidence for causing cancer based on studies of animals exposed to high levels of this chemical over their entire lifetimes.

At the level of PFOS detected in your water, exposure from drinking water and food preparation is well below PFOS exposures associated with health effects.

What is New York State doing about PFOS in public drinking water?

The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) has adopted a drinking water regulation that requires all public water systems to test for PFOS. If found above the MCL, the water supplier must take steps to lower the level to meet the standard. Exceedances of the MCL signal that steps should be taken by the water system to reduce contaminant levels.

What is being done to remove these contaminants?

The Riverhead Water District is currently in the process of constructing a water treatment system for the removal of the indicated compounds from the affected well. It is expected these facilities will be completed by the end of the 2022 calendar year. Additional information will be shared as further testing and progress occurs. This process is similar for any chemical detected in public drinking water that requires mitigation. The compliance timetable will ensure that your drinking water will meet the MCL as rapidly as possible. The deferral is effective until August 25, 2023.

In the interim, the Riverhead Water District will leave impacted wells off during the periods of lower demand, and only use impacted wells during periods of peak demand. It is expected the effected well will be removed from service prior to the Fall of 2022. Impacted wells will be blended to reduce the levels of PFOS delivered to the distribution system.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, please contact Superintendent Frank Mancini at (631) 727-3205 or 1035 Pulaski Street, Riverhead, NY 11901. You can also contact the Suffolk County department of Health, Office of Water Resources at (631) 852-5810.

If you have additional questions about these contaminants and your health, talk to your health care provider who is most familiar with your health history and can provide advice and assistance about understanding how drinking water may affect your personal health.

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