

DEP Newsroom

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Governor Wolf's PFAS Action Team Outlines Public Outreach Plans

Action Team calls for expert presentations and public input on concerns

Harrisburg, PA – At an organizational meeting held today, Governor Wolf's PFAS Action Team announced that it has opened a comment period to take public input regarding per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and is inviting proposals for expert presentations to the Action Team at a public meeting to be held on November 30, 2018.

“Public comment, expert presentations, public meetings, and additional testing can help us develop a clear path forward, including more fully defining state agency roles to ensure we are doing all we can to address this problem,” Governor Wolf said.

Governor Wolf signed an [executive order](#) forming the PFAS Action Team on September 19, 2018, as one of a series of steps to address PFAS contaminants across the commonwealth and protect Pennsylvania residents. The governor tasked the Action Team with developing a comprehensive response to identify and eliminate sources of contamination, ensure drinking water is safe, and manage environmental contamination.

“As we move forward aggressively to address these substances, it is critical that we work closely with affected residents, municipal officials, water system operators, and the scientific community to gather as much information as we can about potential impacts to public health and the environment,” said Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Patrick McDonnell, who chairs the Action Team.

The PFAS Action Team November 30th meeting will be open to the public, with additional details on time and location to be announced shortly. The PFAS Action Team invites presentation proposals on topics including: known sources of PFAS chemicals, health limits and impacts, and environmental impacts. To propose a presentation topic for the November meeting, please contact ra-epthepolicyoffice@pa.gov. The Action Team will take public comment through the DEP eComment tool - <https://www.ahs.dep.pa.gov/eComment/>.

In addition to Secretary McDonnell, the Action Team is led by the secretaries of the departments of Health, Military and Veteran Affairs, Community and Economic Development, Agriculture, Transportation, and the State Fire Commissioner.

“The Wolf Administration is committed to ensuring that Pennsylvanians are informed of the potential health risks of PFAS, and the work that has been done to investigate the topic,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “The Department of Health has been on the forefront, participating in a pilot project to inform future studies across the U.S. on PFAS. We are committed to working to ensure the health and well-being of Pennsylvanians.”

Over the course of the past year, the Department of Health (DOH) has been involved in a pilot to help determine the prevalence of PFAS. Part of the program, which is funded by the federal government, has involved conducting blood level testing for members of randomly chosen households. These individuals have agreed to the testing and visited a clinic to have a blood sample drawn. DOH has begun sending results of the blood level testing to those who were tested. A final report will be developed based on test results, with a public meeting planned to discuss the final report.

Other Executive Actions announced by the governor to address PFAS includes outreach to both the EPA and Pennsylvania’s congressional delegation to push for additional funding and coordination and hiring toxicologists at DOH to evaluate defensible PFAS drinking water limits. In addition, DEP is currently developing a sampling plan to test public water systems and identify any additional systems with elevated PFAS levels in drinking water. Sampling will begin in early 2019, and water systems will be selected based on risk characteristics developed by the department. Results will be shared with the public via the Action Team when completed.

PFAS substances were commonly used in applications that include surface coating of paper and cardboard packaging products, carpets, non-stick pans, and textiles, as well as firefighting foams. These substances have been detected in air, water, and soil in and around production manufacturing facilities, and airports and military bases that used firefighting foams. Companies began phasing out the production and use of several PFAS substances in the early 2000s, and two of the most well studied—perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS)—are no longer manufactured or imported into the United States. Despite the phase-out, contamination has been identified at 15 sites in Pennsylvania, each of which are being addressed by state and federal cleanup efforts.

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