



EPA New Health Advisory for PFOA and PFOS

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“For more information on EPA Health Advisories, regulations, PFOA, and PFOS please visit: <https://www3.epa.gov/>”

First: What you need to know

On May 19, 2016 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a new drinking water health advisory for health risks associated with a lifetime exposure to perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), which are organic compounds that have been historically used in carpets, clothing, food packaging and a number of industrial processes. Although not regulated by the EPA, these chemicals were included in an EPA monitoring program during 2013-2015 because of potential health concerns due to long-term exposure. The City of Zephyrhills and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) have been working together on EPA’s recommendations following the release of this new health advisory.

What is a health advisory?

EPA health advisories are based on the best available peer-reviewed science, including lab and epidemiological studies, regarding exposure to certain chemicals and compounds. Health advisories are precautionary statements to inform people of the long-term risks associated with certain chemicals. An example is the precautionary statement regarding the risk of liver damage due to exposure to high levels of acetaminophen found in products like Tylenol. EPA’s new health advisory for drinking water is based on a lifetime exposure for PFOA and PFOS and offers a margin of protection to even the most sensitive populations. It is also protective for both cancerous and non-cancerous health effects.

How is Zephyrhills impacted?

The City of Zephyrhills’ drinking water system is not under a health advisory. In 2009 the EPA established Provisional Health Advisories for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water. As part of a national information collection program the City tested its water supply in 2014 and results showed levels of PFOA and PFOS to be below the Provisional Health Advisory levels. When the EPA issued its new advisory on May 19, 2016, it lowered the combined health advisory limit (HAL) for PFOA and PFOS to 70 parts per trillion. In response to this change the City conducted additional confirmation sampling on June 8, 2016, which appeared to show that one of its eight water supply wells had results that were above the new lower HAL. This single result could not be confirmed because of a laboratory quality control error. The City of Zephyrhills, in consultation with the FDEP, stopped using the well in question as an important precautionary step immediately upon learning of the unconfirmed test results. It was critical to get reliable test results for PFOA and PFOS before deciding whether it was safe to use the well in response to the new health advisory.

What action is the City taking?

The City of Zephyrhills has promptly taken measures to respond to the EPA's new lower HAL including following-up on critical confirmation sampling and notifying our customers, as well as determining what additional steps are necessary to minimize the levels of PFOA/PFOS in our drinking water supply. As a precaution, the one affected well was turned off, shifting the demand to the seven (7) other wells while the City followed up with additional confirmation sampling of its drinking water supply. On June 29, 2016, two (2) additional confirmation samples were taken and delivered to two (2) different certified laboratories. The results from both laboratories show the combined levels of PFOA and PFOS to be below the HAL.

With this new information the City placed this well back into service on July 20, 2016. In the near and foreseeable future, additional samples have been, and will continue to be routinely collected from the affected well to ensure there are not concerns over time with PFOA and PFOS.

On August 2, 2016 the City took additional follow-up samples from the affected well; the results were 20 parts per trillion for PFOA and 120 parts per trillion for PFOS. With a combined value of 140 parts per trillion, this level is above the EPA's HAL of 70 parts per trillion. The affected well was removed from service on August 12, 2016 and will remain offline while we work with the DEP and the SWFWMD to determine the best path forward.

The City of Zephyrhills Utilities Department is proud of the quality services provided to its citizens and drinking water customers. Please visit the City's website at www.ci.zephyrhills.fl.us for information about the City and its Utilities Department.

How am I affected?

PFOA and PFOS are organic compounds that when consumed at higher levels over a lifetime may lead to cancer and various other potential developmental, liver, immune and thyroid issues, as well as other health effects such as cholesterol changes. The new EPA health advisory establishes maximum limits to contaminants as a means of providing the most sensitive populations with a margin of protection from a lifetime of exposure to PFOA and PFOS in drinking water.

What else should I know?

EPA's assessment indicates that drinking water with individual or combined concentrations of PFOA and PFOS below 70 parts per trillion is not expected to result in adverse health effects over a lifetime of exposure. While the City has appropriately responded to the new EPA health advisory, Zephyrhills is taking additional proactive measures to identify potential causes for the presence of PFOA and PFOS and remains dedicated to assessing this situation in order to minimize levels of these compounds to help ensure we are providing the safest potable water to our residents.

Where to go for more information

For more information on EPA Health Advisories, regulations, PFOA and PFOS please visit: <https://www3.epa.gov/>.