U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, REGION 3
DELAWARE, MARYLAND, PENNSYLVANIA, VIRGINIA, WEST VIRGINIA AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WILLOW GROVE NAVAL AIR STATION JOINT RESERVE BASE COMMUNITY FACT SHEET
EPA TO TEST PRIVATE DRINKING WATER WELLS

Horsham, PA http://www.epa.gov/reg3hwmd/super/sites/PAD987277837/index.htm September 2014

PRIVATE DRINKING WATER WELLS TO BE TESTED FOR PERFLUOROOCTANE SULFONATE (PFOS) AND PERFLUOROOCTANOIC ACID (PFOA)

At the request of the U.S. Navy, the EPA is sampling private drinking water wells in the area of the Willow Grove Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NASJRB) in Horsham, PA. The purpose of the sampling is to determine if wells have been impacted by PFOA and PFOS and if additional actions are needed to protect human health and the environment. EPA is coordinating closely with the U.S. Navy, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), and the Horsham Water and Sewer Authority (HWSA).

Samples taken recently by the HWSA as part of the federal Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule 3 (UCMR) show levels of PFOS above EPA's provisional health advisory level (HAL) in two public supply wells. Those wells have already been taken off-line. At this time, PFOA has not been detected above the provisional HAL at any of the other HWSA supply wells.

EPA SEEKS PERMISSION TO SAMPLE PRIVATE DRINKING WATER WELLS

Representatives from the EPA are contacting users of private drinking water wells to obtain permission to take samples from those wells.

The purpose of the sampling is to determine if levels of PFOS and PFOA are present in drinking water above the provisional HALs and if actions are necessary to ensure that people have access to an alternate water supply.

The sampling is being done at no cost to private well users and the results are expected to be available within two to three weeks. To have your well tested, please contact:

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215-814-3259

Larry Brown, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
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215-814-5527

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

We understand that the community may have additional questions and concerns about potential exposure to PFOS and PFOA. We will continue to consult with our health agency partners to provide additional information as it becomes available.

Q: Can I continue to drink the public water?
A: Yes. The HWSA wells that had PFOS at a level exceeding the provisional HAL have already been taken off-line.

Q: What if I use a private drinking water well?
A: At this time, we do not have data about private drinking water wells in the area which is why the Navy has requested EPA's expertise to conduct sampling activities.

If samples show PFOS or PFOA levels above the provisional HALs, EPA will work with the U.S. Navy and our local and state partners to ensure private well users have access to an alternate water supply.

Q: What Happened?
A: All of the Horsham supply wells were recently sampled for PFOS and PFOAs and two were found to have PFOS levels above EPA's provisional HAL. PFOS was also detected in other supply wells but not above the provisional HAL. HWSA has notified its customers about this water quality information.

In the past, other contaminants have been identified in the area of the NASJRB, a condition the U.S. Navy has and continues to investigate and cleanup.

Q: What are Provisional Health Advisory Levels (HALs)?
A: In 2009, EPA issued provisional HALs for PFOS and PFOA for which there are no drinking water standards. The provisional HAL values are 0.4 parts per billion for every liter of water (ppb/L) for PFOA and 0.2 ppb/L for PFOS. Horsham supply well No. 26 and No. 40 were found to have PFOS above the provisional HAL at 0.7 and 1.0 ppb/L respectively.

While EPA continues its research into the impacts of these chemicals on human health and the environment, provisional HALs serve as informal technical guidance designed to assist federal, state and local officials in evaluating threats to local water supplies. Provisional HALs are not federally enforceable standards and are subject to change as new information becomes available.

Starting in 2013, the EPA required many public water systems, including the HWSA, to sample for a group of 28 unregulated contaminants, including PFOS and PFOA. Monitoring for these contaminants will continue through December 2015.

Q: What adverse health effects may be associated with exposure to PFOS and PFOA?
A: Studies indicate that PFOA and PFOS can cause developmental, reproductive, and other adverse effects in laboratory animals. The most consistent findings from epidemiology studies are elevated serum total cholesterol levels among exposed populations with more limited findings related to low infant birth weights.

Q: What is being done?
A: The HWSA has taken Supply Well No. 26 and No. 40 off-line.

EPA, the U.S. Navy, PADEP and the HWSA are currently evaluating possible response actions, including treatment options for those wells.

The U.S. Navy took additional samples from the affected public wells in early August 2014 and expects the results by mid-August 2014.

In addition, the U.S. Navy has requested EPA expertise to sample private drinking water wells in the vicinity of suspected Navy sources to determine if PFOS is present at levels above the provisional HAL.

Q: What are PFOS and PFOA?
A: PFOS and PFOA are organic chemicals used in repellants for stains, water, oil, and grease. Commercial and consumer products containing or degrading to these compounds were first introduced in the 1950s. They have been used in a variety of products such as the fabric of upholstered furniture, carpets, nonstick cookware, floor wax, and the lining of microwave popcorn bags. Firefighting foams also contain these chemicals. Over time, both chemicals became widely distributed in the environment and have been detected in the blood of humans, wildlife, and fish.

Additional Information

EPA information on PFOA and PFOS
http://www.epa.gov/oppt/pfoa/pubs/pfoainfo.html

EPA drinking water health advisories
http://water.epa.gov/drink/standards/hascience.cfm

EPA's 2014 draft health effects for PFOA and PFOS
http://peerreview.versar.com/epa/pfoa/

Ongoing cleanup at the NASJRB
http://www.epa.gov/reg3hwmd/super/sites/PAD987277837/index.htm

Contact Us

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