



SEE: What is PFAS?

PFAS are man-made chemicals that have been used since the 1940s in consumer products such as carpeting, upholstery, waterproof clothing, cosmetics, food wrappers/packaging, firefighting foams, and metal plating. Often called “forever chemicals”, they are persistent and do not break down well in the environment. The EPA has classified them as a contaminant.



A Mighty River
Amos 5: 24

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Season of Creation 2023

How does PFAS get into drinking water? PFAS gets

into drinking water when products or wastes containing them are used, disposed of, or spilled onto the ground or into lakes and rivers. Higher amounts of contamination are often found in areas around airports, landfills, metal plating facilities, and tanneries. PFAS contamination has become an issue that impacts states across the country.

How are people exposed and what are the health risks? The main way people are exposed to PFAS chemicals is by swallowing them—either in drinking water or from food containing PFAS. PFAS builds up over time in the blood and organs of humans, fish and animals. PFAS are known to contribute to health problems including increased cholesterol, changes in the body’s hormones and immune system, decreased fertility, and increased risk of cancer.

JUDGE: What should be done to address PFAS contamination?

Pope Francis reminds us, “Fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance, since it is indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic systems” (Laudato Si’, 28). Water is a life issue, and we must find solutions to keep hazardous contaminants like PFAS out of our water. Here are several efforts underway:

- The Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) was established in 2019 to work with state agencies and federal and local partners to identify sources of PFAS contamination throughout the state and ensure appropriate public health responses.
- At the national level, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has:
 - Proposed the PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation, anticipated to be finalized by the end of 2023 and to prevent thousands of deaths and serious PFAS-attributable illnesses when implemented.
 - Proposed a rule to declare PFAS chemicals as hazardous substances under the Superfund Law—which would tighten clean-up standards and requirements around polluters if finalized.
- Michigan Senator Gary Peters is working to press the Air Force to do more to clean-up PFAS contamination and military installations across the country—including at the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda. Peters has also passed provisions into law that take a number of actions: from allowing airports to phase out the use of firefighting foams that contain PFAS (non-PFAS firefighting foams can be used in most cases instead) to banning the Department of Defense from using them in training exercises and phasing out the purchase of these foams.

ACT: What can you do to protect water resources and prevent harm from PFAS?

- Be aware of and support legislation and policy to protect our water resources from PFAS contamination.
- Contact your elected officials to ask them to take action to protect our water against PFAS contamination.
- If your drinking water source is a well, consider having your water tested to ensure safety. For a list of certified PFAS testing labs and more information click here: <https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/drinking-water/sampling>. Public drinking water systems are being tested and monitored for compliance.
- Don’t eat fish or game contaminated by PFAS. Find Michigan safe fish eating advisories here: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/safety-injury-prev/environmental-health/topics/eatsafefish/find-your-area> and find Michigan PFAS game and wildlife advisories here: <https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/FishAndWildlife>

