



Town of Duxbury

Department of Public Works
Town Offices
878 Tremont Street
Duxbury, MA 02332

Sheila J. Sgarzi, PE
Director of Public Works

January 22, 2024

Dear Customers:

We are closely monitoring a family of chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that have been detected in some public water supplies in Massachusetts and across the nation. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) currently has a drinking water standard for the sum of six PFAS compounds (PFAS6). This standard requires all Massachusetts public water suppliers to regularly test for PFAS. The sum of PFAS6 may not exceed 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L), equal to 20 parts per trillion (ppt).

You may have heard in the news that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently issued a draft federal drinking water rule which sets the limit for certain PFAS lower than the Massachusetts standard. EPA is entertaining public comment on their proposal now and if the proposed rule is finalized, Massachusetts will adopt limits at least as stringent as EPA; the EPA process may take another year before it is completed. Duxbury Water Department will be reviewing our results from previous sampling and will be evaluating whether further action may be necessary if EPA lowers the drinking water standard.

The Duxbury Water Department has a mission to deliver clean and reliable water, and we are always concerned about threats to our water supply. We already test regularly for regulated contaminants, and if above the standard, take necessary measures to treat the drinking water. It's important to note that our source water has not changed, but with relatively recent advances in laboratory testing, the presence of PFAS can now be found in parts per trillion, where in the past it would be undetected in parts per million or billion. For perspective, a part per trillion is equal to 1 drop in 20 Olympic-size swimming pools. Please be assured that we are following the national rulemaking closely and will take the necessary action to work toward compliance with any new regulations and communicate those plans with the public.

PFAS are a family of chemicals used for nonstick, stain-resistant and water-proof coatings, and in numerous consumer products, industrial uses, and firefighting foams. Manufacturing of certain PFAS was discontinued in the U.S. decades ago, but they may still be used in imported products. PFAS are resilient and do not degrade easily. As a result, they are widely found in the environment as products are disposed of and PFAS leaches into the soil and water, finding its way to food and drinking water sources.

PFAS is ubiquitous, and in the United States and other industrialized countries, most people have concentrations of these compounds in their blood. The good news is the levels have

been dropping as use of certain PFAS have been discontinued. A 2015-2016 federal study found an 82% drop in PFOS and 70% drop in PFOA in the general population, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

For now, MassDEP recommends that consumers in a sensitive subgroup (pregnant or nursing women, infants and people diagnosed by their health care provider to have a compromised immune system), are advised not to consume, drink, or cook with water when the level of PFAS6 is above 20 ppt. These individuals are advised to use alternative sources of water such as bottled water tested for PFAS6, or in-home filtration systems certified to remove PFAS6 by independent testing groups.

Scientists are still learning about the health effects of exposures to mixtures of PFAS. MassDEP states consuming water with PFAS6 above the drinking water standard does not mean that adverse effects will occur, and that the degree of risk depends on the level of chemicals and the duration of exposure. There are scientific studies that suggest potential links between exposure to certain PFAS in the environment and health effects. The studies have looked at the effects on the development of fetuses and infants, the thyroid, the liver, kidneys, hormone levels and the immune system, as well as possible cancer risks when exposed to PFOA and/or PFOS.

We understand that you may have questions and concerns. If you have questions about the drinking water regulations or health risks posed by this contaminant you can contact the MassDEP Drinking Water Program at: program.director-dwp@mass.gov . If you have questions about specific symptoms, you can contact your doctor or other health care provider. If you have general questions about public health, you can contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at 1-617-624-5757.

Sincerely

Mark Cloud
Water & Sewer Superintendent

If you wish to learn more about PFAS, visit www.safewatermass.org, a website developed by the Massachusetts Water Works Association to provide information to our consumers and links to reliable sources of additional information.