

City of Chickamauga Public Notice

April 22, 2024

The City of Chickamauga is notifying the public of Per and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) chemicals that have been detected in the water system.

What are PFAS?

PFAS chemicals are commonly referred to as “forever chemicals” and are comprised of man-made synthetic chemicals that have been in use since the 1940s. These chemicals were popular in use due to their oil-repellant traits, but it also means the chemicals remain in the environment due to their inability to breakdown or deteriorate over time, hence the name “forever chemicals”.

PFAS chemicals have been released into the air, soil, and water by manufacturing and processing facilities, production of products, military installations, and many other avenues. PFAS chemicals were also incorporated into home products such as non-stick cookware, fabric protectors, waxes, and paints. There are rules and regulations in place that eliminate the use of PFAS chemicals from U.S. manufacturing processes today, but the chemicals remain in our environment and make their way into U.S. waterways and ultimately through water filter plants. PFAS compounds are commonly found in the environment and sometimes even people’s blood and the amount detected varies all over the United States. Exposure to PFAS chemicals over certain levels may result in adverse health effects.

What are the rules and regulations for PFAS in water supply systems?

The rules and regulations regarding PFAS chemicals are rapidly developing. On April 10, 2024, the EPA released PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulations. The EPA set limits for five (5) individual PFAS chemicals as follows: PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, PFHxS, and HFPO-DA (aka GenX Chemicals). A Hazard Index (HI) Maximal Contaminant Level (MCL) was also set for mixtures: PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA, and PFBS. The new rule will reduce the levels of PFAS in drinking water across the United States.

The updated regulations were released after an interim health advisory period from June 2022 to April 2024. The interim health advisories were for four of the PFAS chemicals: PFOA, PFOS, PFBS, and GenX. Health advisories are non-enforceable and non-regulatory and are for informational purposes only.

The limited PFAS testing for the Coke Ovens Well serving the City of Chickamauga was completed when the EPA had health advisories in effect for four PFAS chemicals. Since initial and preliminary testing was completed, the PFAS regulations were updated and announced for five PFAS chemicals, including a Hazard Index for two or more of four PFAS as a mixture.

The newly announced PFAS regulations and limits are enforceable. Within three (3) years, water systems shall comply with monitoring, reporting, and public notification requirements in their Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs). Water systems shall also conduct ongoing compliance monitoring and public notifications for any monitoring and testing procedure violations.

Within five (5) years, water systems shall comply with all regulatory requirements for PFAS MCLs, meaning additional treatment to remove PFAS from the water supply system may be required to ensure all drinking water standards are met.

How are PFAS Chemicals Measured?

PFAS chemicals are measured in parts per trillion. 1 part per trillion (ppt) is equivalent to one drop of water in a pool the size of a football field that’s 43 feet deep, or 1 drop in 1 trillion gallons. The EPA established a Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) and a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for limiting PFAS chemicals. The MCLG is a non-enforceable target level where there is no known or expected health risk. The MCL is an enforceable standard and is the highest allowable level for a contaminant in drinking water. The Hazard Index is the sum of the fractions that compares the level of each PFAS measured to any mixture containing two or more of the chemicals specified.

EPA Limits for PFAS Chemicals:

Chemical	Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG)	Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)
PFOA	0	4.0 ppt
PFOS	0	4.0 ppt
PFHxS	10 ppt	10 ppt
HFPO-DA (GenX Chemicals)	10 ppt	10 ppt
PFNA	10 ppt	10 ppt
Mixture of two or more: PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA, and PFBS	Hazard Index of 1 (unitless)	Hazard Index of 1 (unitless)

Is PFAS in my Drinking Water?

The City of Chickamauga has one primary water source: one 330 foot deep well located at Coke Ovens. Walker County Water & Sewage Authority is an alternate water supply, but only as an emergency backup. The City has no other internal alternate water sources.

The City of Chickamauga has completed limited testing for PFAS in the water supply system and the results are as follow:

PFAS Compound	EPA Maximum Contaminant Level (ppt)	Amount Detected (ppt)	Location
PFOA	4.0	10.6	Coke Ovens Well
PFOS	4.0	15.4	Coke Ovens Well
PFBS	Included in Hazard Index of 1 (unitless)	40.1	Coke Ovens Well

The City of Chickamauga takes our responsibility to protect public health and meet all regulatory requirements seriously. We understand customers may have questions and concerns while our water department continues to meet and exceed all regulatory requirements for drinking water standards.

What is the City of Chickamauga doing about PFAS?

The City of Chickamauga is proactive in identifying PFAS compounds in our water supply system and determining the best methods to treat these compounds. Effectively immediately, the City is working with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and consulting engineers to determine a best course of action for monitoring current and future PFAS issues and determining a treatment plan based on monitoring results and regulatory requirements.

Do you still have questions?

The Georgia EPD has a PFAS monitoring project to assess PFAS levels across the state and has an interactive monitoring map. You can learn more about the project and view the results by clicking the link: [GA EPD PFAS Information](#)*. To view the results, click on “Current PFAS Issues”.

The US EPA PFAS information can be found here: [US EPA PFAS Information](#)**

The US EPA PFAS Fact Sheet can be found here: [US EPA PFAS Fact Sheet](#)***

*GA EPD PFAS Information Link:

<https://gaepd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=e8f2c6a51c1c41088002350f1eabe598>

**US EPA PFAS Information Link:

<https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas>

***US EPA PFAS Fact Sheet Link:

https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-04/pfas-npdwr_fact-sheet_general_4.9.24v1.pdf