

Understanding PFAS

Water safety in Vancouver

Providing our customers safe water and protecting public health is the City's top priority. On average, we deliver 9.5 billion gallons per year of clean and safe water to more than 270,000 people in a 72-square mile service area. Vancouver tests all drinking water in accordance with all state and federal requirements and in fact, puts its water through more stringent tests than U.S. and Washington laws require.

Like many jurisdictions, the City is addressing an emerging issue with per-and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances.

What are PFAS?

PFAS stands for per-and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances. PFAS are a group of over 5,000 manmade chemicals that are found in many common consumer and industrial products like non-stick cookware, food packaging, stain resistant fabrics, firefighting foam and more. Most PFAS don't break down, which is why they are also called "forever chemicals."

What is the source of PFAS in the City's water?

Though we know that PFAS are used in numerous consumer products, the specific sources contributing to PFAS in the City water supply are still not known. PFAS are widespread in the environment and throughout the world.



Stain- & water-
resistance
treatments



Nonstick
cookware



Waterproof
apparel



Cleaning
products



Firefighting
foam



Takeout
containers



Carpets &
textiles

Consumer products known to contain PFAS.

Does the City regularly test for PFAS?

The City proactively tested for PFAS in 2020 and 2021. Starting in 2023, the City will be on a regular testing and reporting schedule for PFAS.

How much PFAS are in the City's water?

While the levels of PFAS are low, they are still above the Washington State Department of Health's adopted State Action Levels and the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Health Advisories Levels issued in June 2022. Actual concentrations of PFAS in the City's water can be found at **cityofvancouver.us/pfasresults**.

Is my water safe to use?

The low levels of PFAS found in Vancouver's water supply are slightly above recommended limits in state and federal guidance. The recommended limits are based on long-term exposure to PFAS throughout a person's life and represent a conservative level at which no adverse impacts are expected over a lifetime of drinking the water, even in health-sensitive populations. According to the Washington State Department of Health, if you have been drinking water with PFAS above a State Action Level, that does not mean you will get sick or have health problems. If you are concerned about potential health impacts from exposure to PFAS, contact your health care provider.

What is the City doing?

The City is working with water quality engineers to help us understand possible sources and concentration of the PFAS in the City's groundwater supply. The City is evaluating treatment technologies that can be used to remove PFAS and working to estimate the cost to design, build and operate them. The City is also seeking funding to install the treatment systems.

Where can I learn more?

You can learn more about the City's PFAS response at **cityofvancouver.us/pfas**. You can view the City's sampling results at **cityofvancouver.us/pfasresults**. You can also visit **doh.wa.gov/pfas** for more information.

cityofvancouver.us/pfas
cityofvancouver.us/pfasresults

For more information call the Water Quality Team, **360-487-8276**

