South Adams County Water and Sanitation District Responds to Proposed PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation

EPA announces first proposed Drinking Water Regulations for six PFAS compounds.

Commerce City – South Adams County Water and Sanitation District (SACWSD) announced its response to a proposed national drinking water standard from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for six per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) released on March 14, 2023.

If finalized, the proposal would regulate PFOA and PFOS as individual contaminants and PFHxS, PFNA, PFBS, and HFPO-DA (commonly referred to as GenX Chemicals) as a PFAS mixture. The EPA is also proposing health-based, non-enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLGs) for these six PFAS. In a press release published by the EPA, the proposed regulations include the following:

- PFOA and PFOS: EPA is proposing to regulate PFOA and PFOS at a level they can be reliably measured at 4 parts per trillion.
- PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and GenX Chemicals: EPA is also proposing a regulation to limit any mixture containing one or more of PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and/or GenX Chemicals. For these PFAS, water systems would use an established approach called a hazard index calculation, defined in the proposed rule, to determine if the combined levels of these PFAS pose a potential risk.

The Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) is the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are enforceable standards set by the EPA.

Currently these are proposed MCLs for which the EPA is requesting public comment. The public comment period will open following the proposed rule publishing in the Federal Register. All public comments received by the EPA will be evaluated before a final standard is adopted. Public water systems will have a certain number of years to comply with the new standard once it is finalized.

SACWSD first discovered PFAS in its water supply when it voluntarily began testing water five years ago in 2018. When the District discovered PFAS in its water, it took the following steps to reduce PFAS levels:

- Shutting off wells with high PFAS concentrations;
- Increasing the number of granular activated carbon filter media change-outs;
- Purchasing state-of-the-art monitoring equipment and hiring additional laboratory staff to provide frequent and rapid monitoring; and
- Working with CDPHE on upstream source control and recouping PFAS-related costs.

In June 2022, the EPA lowered its interim lifetime Health Advisory Limit (HAL) for PFOA and PFOS from 70 parts per trillion (ppt) combined to 0.004 ppt for PFOA and 0.02 ppt for PFOS. At that time, the District took additional steps to lower the levels of PFAS including:

- Purchasing additional treated water from Denver Water to blend with District water; and
- Optimizing the treatment process through the District’s Granulated Activated Carbon Treatment system.
These actions have resulted in the reduction of PFAS in drinking water to a non-detect level. However they are short-term solutions, that are not economically feasible or sustainable for the long-term treatment of PFAS.

“The District is continuing to provide its residents drinking water that meets all federal and state regulations and currently meets the regulations that have been proposed by the EPA,” Abel Moreno, District Manager, said. “At the same time, I continue to be concerned that the costs of mitigating PFAS are falling on our community and we are actively seeking funding to reduce the costs of sustainable treatment solutions.”

The District is actively designing a PFAS treatment system to provide a long-term sustainable solution to treat PFAS. The treatment system is expected to be fully designed by the end of 2023. In addition to designing the treatment system, the District is pursuing funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other federal funding sources in order to minimize costs to our ratepayers.

The District’s drinking water continues to meet all current drinking water regulations. It will continue to follow the final MCL decision of the EPA and provide updates to the community. For more information about the District’s response to PFAS, please visit the District website at sacwsd.org/pfas.

**About South Adams County Water and Sanitation District**
The South Adams County Water and Sanitation District is a special district providing water and sanitary sewer service to over 65,000 residents in Commerce City and parts of unincorporated Adams County. For more information about the District, please visit [www.sacwsd.org](http://www.sacwsd.org).

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