American Water Works Association
Michigan Section
www.mi-water.org

Fact Sheet

PFAS

BACKGROUND:

In recent years, dozens of communities learned some unsettling news regarding manmade compounds in their drinking water, PFAS. PFAS is an abbreviation for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances encompassing a whole family of manmade chemicals that contain a carbon and fluorine atom backbone. There are hundreds of known PFAS compounds with varying functional groups, which can include other elements such as oxygen, hydrogen, or sulfur.

PFAS have been widely used in making cookware, food packaging clothing, carpeting, personal care products, firefighting foams, and other applications. Once introduced into the environment, PFAS are highly persistent and may be linked to adverse human health effects. In Michigan, the issue has been highlighted in the news because there are several communities where these compounds were detected in drinking water.

More research is needed to better understand the impacts of compounds on humans; however, some studies have shown that certain PFAS may:

- affect growth, learning, and behavior of infants and older children
- lower a woman's chance of getting pregnant
- interfere with the body's natural hormones
- increase cholesterol levels
- affect the immune system and
- increase the risk of certain types of cancer

HEALTH ADVISORY LEVEL

The US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has required some communities to test for PFAS as part of an unregulated contaminant monitoring rule. In 2016 the USEPA issued a lifetime health advisory level (LHA) of 0.07 parts per billion (ppb) for the combined amount of two of PFAS compounds, perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

Effective January 10, 2018, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) developed drinking water criteria for the combined levels of PFOS and PFOA that match the USEPA LHA of 0.07 ppb. Note that this criteria is <u>not</u> an enforceable drinking water standard, but a cleanup criteria that the MDEQ can use to initiate remediation of contaminated source waters. Community Water Supplies may interpret this as a surrogate health standard for the drinking water.

WHAT IS NEXT

Concurrent with the development of drinking water criteria by the MDEQ, in December 2017, HB 5375 was introduced in the Michigan House of Representative to regulate PFOS and PFOA in

drinking water. The proposed bill includes individual limits of 0.005 ppb respectively for PFOS and PFOA.

In November 2017, Governor Snyder has assembled a Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) led by former Michigan deputy attorney general Carol Isaacs that is tasked with developing coordinate response plan to address PFAS in the State of Michigan. This team is coordinating a multi-disciplinary approach to PFAS in the Michigan. Components of the program include:

1. Collecting water samples from all community water systems in the State that do not purchase their drinking water from another community, and all schools on their own wells, by the end of 2018,
2. Developing a statewide inventory of firefighting foams that contain PFAS,
3. Collecting samples from wastewater treatment plant both influent and effluent to determine potential sources of PFAS in Michigan watersheds, and
4. Targeting sampling of surface waters in the State that are used for public water supplies to characterize potential sources.

MI-AWWA supports the State's effort to gather more data on the sources of PFAS in the environment. Only through a robust water sampling campaign can Michigan understand the breadth and scope of this problem in Michigan. In addition to the current data collection campaign, the MI-AWWA encourages the MDEQ and water utilities to work on risk communication for drinking water system customers. PFAS is becoming a more commonly discussed topic in the media and it is important that water system customers get accurate and consistent information on the quality of their water supply. MDEQ, in concert with EPA, should support the development of a clear and concise communication campaign for Michigan water system customers.

On the National scale, as part of the PFAS Leadership Summit hosted by EPA on May 22 in Washington, DC, EPA committed to developing a PFAS Management Plan by the end of 2018. In addition, EPA indicated that they would be starting the process to evaluate setting a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for PFOS and PFOA, and should have a regulatory determination made by early 2019. Many State representatives at this Summit indicated that they were seeking Federal guidance on this subject since individual State approaches to regulating these compounds diverged substantially. Heidi Grether, Director of MDEQ, was one of the state representatives that vocally supported Federal leadership on PFAS.

MI-AWWA will continue to communicate the issues and provide support for removing obstacles so that community water supplies can operate efficiently to protect public health. If you have any questions or comments about this topic or the role MI-AWWA is playing, please contact MI-AWWA at 517-292-2912 or info@mi-water.org.