



PFAS are a man-made chemical that are used in the manufacture of consumer goods including cookware, flame-retardants, waterproofing, furniture and take out containers. There are 5,000 variations of PFAS in use--PFOA and PFAS are the most common despite the fact that they are no longer manufactured in the US. These chemicals do not break down in the environment and they bioaccumulate in the food chain. They are associated with birth defects and developmental damage to the liver, kidneys and immune system, as well as cancer risk.

### **What kind of PFAS are in Colorado?**

The Environmental Working Group, an environmental education and research group, estimates that at least 2,500 industrial facilities across the U.S. could be discharging PFAS into the air, water and soil. Colorado has recorded high levels of PFHxS, one type of PFAS found in fire-fighting foam. This product is stored and used at fire stations, airports, refineries, and oil and gas wells. In 2019, Colorado took the first step in regulating the use of this dangerous foam in some situations. Now we need to see the state cleaned up.

### **Is PFAS in drinking water in Colorado?**

We don't really know because there is not enough testing. However, north metro Denver has recorded high levels of PFOA and PFOS in drinking water. There are also elevated levels of PFAS in the drinking water in the three towns (Fountain, Windsor, and Widefield) near Peterson Air Force Base and near Buckley Air Force Base. The Air Force Academy has used firefighting foam and it appears to have contaminated the groundwater with PFHxS which migrated to at least two nearby drinking water wells. We also know the Boulder Mountain and Sugarloaf Fire Districts in western Boulder County have known contamination levels of groundwater wells.

### **Are there any federal restrictions on PFAS?**

No. There is a non-binding health advisory limit for PFOA and PFAS in drinking water. On February 14, 2019 EPA issued a PFAS Action Plan promising Congress and citizens that it will regulate PFOA and PFAS in drinking water within a year. However, on March 10, 2020, EPA issued a notice to *consider* developing regulations, with a timeline pushing out regulation another five years. This year, the National Defense Authorization Act required that facilities report if it manufactures or uses any of 172 PFAS chemicals. Reporting is not enough.

## **What about state protections?**

Some states recognize that the federal government is failing to protect citizens so about 10 states have set their own drinking water standards. Some states, like Michigan and Massachusetts, are going to the sources to prevent them from contaminating the air and water. Some states like Minnesota are recovering millions of dollars from polluters so that they can clean up their state. See [www.saferstates.com](http://www.saferstates.com)

## **How is Colorado doing?**

Colorado has been slow to act. There is no timeline for setting drinking water standards in Colorado. The policy standards that the state is currently proposing are less protective of public health than those used by progressive states. Linda Birnbaum, former director of the National Institutes of Health commented on the proposed policy, "...the result is that Colorado could ignore emissions that render some state waters undrinkable, or in need of long-term and expensive treatment. Colorado should instead consider stronger protections."

## **What can I do?**

The Colorado Department of Health and the Environment hoped to fund a testing program and further research but COVID 19 has diverted resources and now this is unlikely. **Please urge the state to rely on the research and work done in other states to develop a program now.**

The Colorado Water Quality Control Commission is meeting July 13-14. Please let them know that you support clean drinking water in Colorado so it is imperative that the state set enforceable standards now.

Sign up to participate by July 6: [cdphe.wqcc@state.co.us](mailto:cdphe.wqcc@state.co.us) or call 303-692-3463

**Do you have more questions? Contact us and we will help you find the answers!**

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