

## Setting the Record Straight about PFAS

As a rule, the Montevallo Water Works and Sewer Board does not take a position on political campaigns. However, when our work and the quality of our water is misrepresented, as it has been during the mayoral race, we feel it is important to correct the record and provide an accurate picture of our water quality.

The existence of low, parts-per-trillion levels of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, was brought up during a recent debate. (PFAS) are a large and diverse group of chemicals used in many commercial applications due to their unique properties, such as resistance to high and low temperatures, resistance to degradation, and nonstick characteristics.

Although PFAS has been manufactured and used broadly in consumer goods since the 1940s, concern over potential adverse effects on human health grew in the early 2000s with the detection of PFOA and PFOS in human blood.

Many PFAS, including PFOA and PFOS, are environmentally persistent, bio-accumulative, and remain in human bodies for a long time. While they have been referred to as “forever chemicals,” levels in the human body do drop when exposure is reduced.

According to the EPA, 80% or more of a person's exposure to PFAS comes from consumer products like cookware, cosmetics, carpets, furniture treatments, food packaging, toilet paper, contact lenses, and personal care products like deodorants and dental floss. PFAS have also been found in the outside air and in the dust in people's homes. 20% or less of a person's exposure is from the consumption of drinking water.

Exposure to some PFAS over a long period of time may lead to negative health effects, including an increased risk of cancer. While most non-essential uses of PFOA and PFOS were voluntarily phased out by U.S. manufacturers twenty years ago, these chemicals remain in the environment due to their persistence and lack of degradation. It's why they are found in our drinking water today.

After years of consideration, on April 10, 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced drinking water standards for six PFAS, including perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid (HFPO-DA, also known as Gen-X), perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), and perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS).

PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS, PFNA, and HFPO-DA (Gen-X) will be regulated as individual contaminants. PFHxS, PFNA, PFBS, and HFPODA will also be regulated as a PFAS mixture.

These standards were not put into effect in April 2024; the EPA's deadline for water utilities to comply with the standards was set for mid-2029.

With the change in presidential administrations, the EPA's new leadership announced it was making several changes to the drinking water standards on May 14, 2025. Among the most important changes, the EPA announced it was delaying the compliance date for utilities to meet the PFOA and PFOS drinking water standards until 2031. The EPA stated this would help address the most significant compliance challenges it heard from public water systems, members of Congress, and other stakeholders, while supporting actions to protect the American people from certain PFAS in drinking water.

The EPA also announced its intent to rescind the regulations and reconsider the regulatory determinations for PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA (GenX), and the Hazard Index mixture of these three plus PFBS to ensure that the determinations and any resulting drinking water regulation follow the legal process laid out in the Safe Drinking Water Act. The EPA stated it took these actions to ensure that the determinations and any resulting drinking water regulation follow the legal process laid out in the Safe Drinking Water Act.

As of our latest results, Montevallo Water's levels for PFOA are 2.25 parts-per-trillion, under the EPA's 2031 drinking water standard. Our levels for PFOS are at 10 parts-per-trillion, over the 2031 drinking water standard.

Although Montevallo Water has until 2031 to meet the compliance deadline we are taking immediate action to remove these contaminants from your water. Montevallo Water has been monitoring for PFAS, notifying the public of the levels of these PFAS, and undertaking efforts to evaluate how best to reduce the levels of these PFAS in drinking water.

Due to the unique chemical properties of PFAS, conventional water treatment plants are incapable of fully removing PFAS from drinking water. As a result, Montevallo Water is evaluating water filtration systems to reduce PFAS to non-detectable levels. Montevallo Water does not believe that the costs or expenses associated with filtering out PFAS in our water supply should be the responsibility of our ratepayers.

For that reason, we have engaged outside counsel with extensive experience in PFAS litigation to evaluate and, where necessary, litigate claims against those responsible for the PFAS chemicals in our water supply.