METRO WASTEWATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT

Learn more about PFAS

The Basics of PFAS

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) is a common term to collectively describe a family of human-made chemical compounds found in numerous products used in everyday life, such as paper food packaging, non-stick coating materials, and stain resistant fabrics. Thousands of these compounds are used to manufacture products sold globally.

Through widespread manufacturing and use of PFAS in common products, PFAS can now be found in the environment and the human body. PFAS are persistent compounds that do not break down and can accumulate over time.

Due to the physical properties of PFAS, collecting and analyzing samples is difficult. As noted in the EPA technical briefs below, at present there are no validated standard EPA methods for analyzing PFAS in surface water, non-potable groundwater, wastewater, or solids.

Common Sources of PFAS

Used by various industries around the world since the 1940s, PFAS have been used to manufacture products designed to resist heat, oil, grease, water, and stains. PFAS are widely used in firefighting foams. PFAS are also present in household products such as non-stick cookware, pizza boxes, stain resistant and waterproof clothing.

PFAS and Your Health

According to the Colorado Department of Health and Environment (CDPHE), you may come in contact with PFAS through air, drinking water, food, indoor dust, household products, and personal care products. According to the CDPHE, health effects from PFAS depend on your level of exposure. Visit the resources listed below to learn more.

The Metro District and PFAS

The Metro District is aware of PFAS and the potential impact of these chemicals on public health and the environment. While wastewater utilities do not use PFAS as part of the treatment process, these compounds may be present in the wastewater generated from homes and businesses. Because of their nature, compounds like PFAS are extremely difficult and expensive to remove.

Since PFAS are not a product of the wastewater treatment process and originate from outside wastewater utilities, solutions for addressing PFAS contamination must focus on the control of these chemicals at their original source. See the letter below from the National Association for Clean Water Agencies.

The Metro District supports a growing body of peer-reviewed scientific research on PFAS and wastewater. As a leader in the clean water industry, we are engaged in stakeholder and other local, state, and national opportunities to develop solutions.

Resources for More Information

- EPA Technical Brief on PFAS sampling methods
  (https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-02/documents/pfas_methods_tech_brief_28feb19_update.pdf)
- EPA Technical Brief on PFAS analytical methods
  (https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-05/documents/technical_brief_pfas_data_review_final_19apr19-508_compliant.pdf)
- EPA PFOS Resource Page
  (https://www.epa.gov/pfas)
- CDPHE PFCs/PFAS Resource Page
  (https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/pfcs)
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (CDC) Resource Page
  (https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/PFAS-health-effects.html)
- NACWA letter published July 2018
  (http://www.nacwa.org/docs/default-source/clean-water-current-pdf/nacwa-comment-for-docket-epa.pdf)