

# DRINKING WATER ADVISORY

January 2022, Wausau Waterworks voluntarily collected water samples of the City of Wausau's drinking water and tested them for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS compounds in Wausau's drinking water are present at levels above Wisconsin's recommended groundwater standard of 20 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOS+PFOA. The sampling results are available here: <https://www.ci.wausau.wi.us/Departments/WausauWaterWorks/PFAS.aspx>. **Wausau Water Works is not in violation of any drinking water standards or regulations and has taken actions proactively to inform and protect the health of its customers.**

## **Potential Health Risks of PFAS and Consumption Advisory**

Long term exposure to high levels of the PFAS may increase cholesterol levels, reduce antibody levels, and reduce a woman's fertility. **Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) recommends people limit their intake of PFAS compounds. People can reduce exposure to PFAS by limiting their consumption of Wausau's drinking water.**

**People can consider alternative water sources such as:**

- Purified or filtered bottled water
- Other sources of water that have been tested for PFAS and do not have levels above recommended standards.
- Filtered water from a pitcher, sink, or whole-house filter system with a certified filter technology. A granular activated carbon (GAC) filter that meets ANSI/NSF Standard 53 or a reverse osmosis (RO) filter with an included GAC component can filter out PFAS. These numbers will be printed on the filter and/or packaging. More information about filtering out PFAS from drinking water is available here: [Reducing PFAS in Your Drinking Water](#). **Boiling water does not remove PFAS.**

## **How people be exposed to PFAS and why are they harmful?**

The main way that people are exposed to PFAS is by drinking water or eating food containing them. PFAS chemicals do not easily absorb into the skin so contact with water that contains PFAS poses a very low health risk.

A large number of studies in people have examined possible relationships between levels of PFAS in blood and harmful health effects in people. However, most of these studies analyzed only a small number of chemicals, and not all PFAS have the same health effects. This research suggests that high levels of certain PFAS may increase cholesterol levels, decrease how well the body responds to vaccines, and reduce fertility in women. Some other studies have indicated that high levels of certain PFAS may increase the risk of thyroid disease, increase the risk of serious conditions like high blood pressure or pre-eclampsia in pregnant women, and lower infant birth weights.

## **What is being done to correct the problem?**

Currently, Wausau Waterworks is investigating treatment techniques which we anticipate will be incorporated into the New Drinking Water Treatment Facility that is currently under construction. In collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and experienced consultants, it is planned that the utility will start an operational pilot study by the end of February or the beginning of March. This study will determine which treatment techniques can efficiently and effectively reduce or remove PFAS from our water. Feasible options will be evaluated and recommended to Wausau Waterworks Commission for change or addition to the treatment scheme of the new facility. The accepted option will then be incorporated into the new facility once approved by WDNR. Implementation is anticipated later this year.

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## What are per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of human-made chemicals that are resistant to heat, water, and oil. These chemicals have been used for decades in many industrial applications and consumer products such as carpeting, waterproof clothing, upholstery, food paper wrappings, personal care products, fire-fighting foams, and metal plating. PFAS have been found at low levels both in the environment and in blood samples of the general U.S. population.

## How does PFAS get into drinking water?

PFAS can get into drinking water when products containing them are used or spilled onto the ground or into lakes and rivers as well as from manufacturing and disposal. PFAS move easily through the ground, getting into groundwater that is used for some water supplies or for private drinking water wells. When spilled into lakes or rivers used as sources of drinking water, they can get into drinking water supplies. PFAS in the air can also end up in rivers and lakes used for drinking water.

**If you have questions regarding the Wausau's drinking water or the testing, please contact:** Scott Boers 715-261-7286

**GENERAL PFAS QUESTIONS --- PLEASE SEE THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES WEBSITE:** <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Contaminants/PFAS.html>

**HEALTH RELATED QUESTIONS---DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES:** Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health at [dhsenvhealth@wi.gov](mailto:dhsenvhealth@wi.gov) or 608-266-1120. More information about PFAS and health risk can be found on the Wisconsin DHS website at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/chemical/pfas.htm>.

**OPERATION OF THE CITY WATER UTILITY---** Scott Boers 715-261-7286

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*Name of Responsible Person* *Area Code-Telephone Number*

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*Street Address* *City* *State* *Zip*

*I certify that the information and statements contained in this public notice are true and correct and have been provided to consumers in accordance with the delivery, content, format, and deadline requirements in Subchapter VII of ch. NR 809, Wis. Adm. Code.*

**X**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*\* Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail