

Town of Ayer, MA Public Water System

Important Information about Your Drinking Water

-- Translate it or speak with someone who understands it --



What happened?

In May 2016, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a lifetime Health Advisory (HA) of 70 parts per trillion (0.070 ug/L) for a combination of two Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). Although we are not required by EPA to routinely monitor for PFAS, we began sampling for PFAS in September 2016. All of our PFAS test results for our treated water were below the EPA advisory level, including our last sample that was taken on March 7, 2018.

Based on additional consideration of information about PFAS, and out of an abundance of caution, MassDEP is considering adopting a more conservative advisory addressing five of the PFAS chemicals, because these five compounds share very similar chemical structures and the available data indicates they are likely to exhibit similar toxicities. MassDEP is in the process of reviewing its recommendations with a panel of experts and expects to adopt formal recommendations this spring. These include perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS) and perfluoroheptanoic acid (PFHpA). MassDEP is considering recommending that:

- 1) water suppliers take steps expeditiously to lower levels of the five PFAS, individually or in combination, to below 70 parts per trillion for all consumers and,
- 2) consumers in sensitive subgroups (pregnant women, nursing mothers and infants) not consume, drink or cook with water when the level of the five PFAS substances, individually or in combination, is above 70 parts per trillion.

The Grove Pond Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is one of two treatment plants that supplies drinking water to our system and treats water from three wells (Wells 6, 7, and 8). The results of the treated water for the five PFAS chemicals at the Grove Pond WTP collected between April 12, 2017 and January 9, 2018 ranged from 85 to 98 parts per trillion, which is above the advisory level that MassDEP is considering. Well 8 was taken offline in February 2018 to reduce the PFAS levels from the Grove Pond WTP to below 70 parts per trillion. Samples of the treated water collected at the Grove Pond WTP on March 7, 2018 utilizing Wells 6 and 7 had results for the five PFAS chemicals of 25 parts per trillion.

What is our water system doing?

We have taken the following pro-active measures:

- Grove Pond Well 8 has been taken out of service.
- Ayer's other wells (Grove Pond Wells 6 and 7 and Spectacle Pond Wells 1A and 2A) were sampled and did not contain any combination of the five PFAS above 70 parts per trillion.
- We will continue to sample our wells and treated water for PFAS.
- We are investigating treatment options for possible future use of Grove Pond Well 8.
- Prior to Grove Pond Well 8 being returned to use, public notice will be provided, which will include additional sample results for PFAS and an explanation of treatment or other actions taken to support the return of Grove Pond Well 8 to service.
- When additional information becomes available this public notice will be updated.

What should you do?

- *You do not need to do anything at this time because the source with elevated PFAS has been shut off.*
- *If you have specific health concerns regarding your past exposure, you should consult a health professional, such as your doctor.*

What are PFAS?

PFAS are contained in firefighting foams, which have been used in training exercises and to extinguish oil and gas fires at a variety of locations including airfields. PFAS are also used in a number of industrial processes and have been

used to make carpets, clothing, fabrics for furniture, paper packaging for food and other materials (e.g. cookware) that are resistant to water, grease or stains. Because these chemicals have been used in an array of consumer products, most people have been exposed to them.

Between 2000 and 2002, PFOS was voluntarily phased-out of production in the U.S. by its primary manufacturer. In 2006, eight major companies voluntarily agreed to phase out their global production of PFOA and PFOA-related chemicals, although there are a limited number of ongoing uses.

While consumer products and food are a large source of exposure to these chemicals for most people, drinking water can be an additional source in the small percentage of communities where these chemicals have contaminated water supplies. Such contamination is typically localized and associated with a specific facility, for example, an industrial facility where these chemicals were produced or used to manufacture other products or an airfield at which they were used for firefighting.

For more information on PFAS see the attached MassDEP Factsheet or visit the websites listed below.

What are the potential adverse health effects with exposure to PFAS?

EPA's 2016 Health Advisory values for PFOS and PFOA were based on recent studies of these substances in laboratory animals and were also informed by studies of exposed people. Overall, these studies indicate that exposure to sufficiently elevated levels of PFOA and PFOS may cause developmental effects in fetuses during pregnancy and in breastfed infants. Effects on the thyroid, the liver, kidneys, hormone levels and the immune system have also been reported. Some studies also suggest a cancer risk may exist in people exposed to levels well above the Health Advisory. The additional three PFAS chemicals are chemically similar to PFOS and PFOA.

It is important to note that consuming water with PFAS above the 70 parts per trillion level does not mean that adverse effects will occur. The degree of risk depends on the level of the chemicals and the duration of exposure. The 70 parts per trillion level assumes that individuals drink only contaminated water, which typically overestimates exposure, and are also exposed to PFAS from sources beyond drinking water, such as food. To enhance safety, several uncertainty factors are additionally applied to account for the differences between animals and humans and the differences from one human to another human. Scientists are still working to study and understand the health risks posed by exposures to PFAS.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, please contact Mark Wetzel, Superintendent, Ayer DPW at 978-772-8240 email address: mwetzel@ayer.ma.us or mailing address: 25 Brook St., Ayer, MA 01432.

You can also get more information from the following sources:

- EPA's Drinking Water Health Advisories can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Statement for PFOS and PFOA can be found at: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/index.html>
- For additional information on possible health effects, you may contact the Massachusetts Department Environmental Protection, Office of Research and Standards, at 617-556-1165.

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.

This notice is being sent to you by: Town of Ayer, DPW PWS ID#: 2019000

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Enc: MassDEP Fact Sheet – PFAS in Drinking Water