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# TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD

OFFICE OF THE PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE/  
WATER DISTRICT MANAGER

5259 US ROUTE 5  
ASCUTNEY, VERMONT 05030

Susanne Terrill  
Human Resources

Olivia Savage  
Principal Clerk

Steve Smith  
Water Operator

December 11, 2023

RE: Public Notice – Ascutney Water District

Dear Weathersfield Residents,

We recently mailed you a Public Notice with important information about your drinking water. The Notice that you received explains that we detected PFAS in the Water Districts wells. The EPA recently changed their health advisory level from 70ppt (parts per trillion) to 0.02ppt for PFAS. Whenever a Water District exceeds the 0.02ppt threshold we are required to send that notice to you within 30 days after we receive notice from the State to do so. Prior to the new EPA limit of 0.02ppt, that wouldn't occur until we exceeded 70ppt from the EPA, or 20ppt from the State of Vermont.

As the Town Manager and Water District Manager, the required Public Notice is confusing, and doesn't provide enough information. Instead, it caused panic within our community, and I do not believe that is acceptable communication from the EPA. The EPA lowered their threshold by 69.98 parts per trillion, which is a significant decrease, and that should have been explained well in advance to the operators of all Water systems in the United States, so that we would have had opportunity to hold Public Meetings and explain what this means for us a lot sooner. While I do not discredit the intent of sending a notice like this, I think it could have been handled a lot better.

Upon receipt of the results of our Water testing for PFAS, we have held meetings with our neighboring towns, a Water Quality Engineer, and the State of Vermont Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division. This issue is not unique to Weathersfield, as health advisories are being distributed all over the country. This is a nationwide problem, and although it is something to be concerned about, the levels detected in the Ascutney Water District are 17.85ppt lower than the State of Vermont standard. The State of Vermont does not issue a "No Drink" on our water until the levels of PFAS exceed 20ppt, and our levels are 2.08ppt at one (1) well site, and 2.15ppt at another well site.

The EPA has not issued a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) at this time. A maximum contaminant level is the maximum level a water system can test until a "No drink" is issued. That level is currently 20ppt for the State of Vermont, and the EPA is proposing 4ppt, but that has not been approved yet. Again, we are testing 2.15ppt in one (1) well and 2.08ppt in the other, which is nearly half the proposed limits from the EPA.

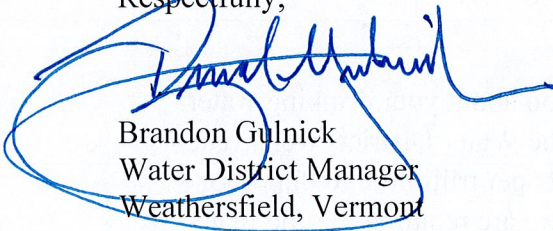


Although we would like to reduce our PFAS levels to zero, there is a lot of work that will be taking place to determine how we can do that. The purpose of this letter is to provide additional information, and a quick "Q&A" that you can reference to answer some of the questions you may have. As a Water District and a Country, there will be a lot of research to review to carefully consider our options. We will be holding a Public Meeting on this issue at Martin Memorial Hall on Monday, December 18, 2023, from 5pm-6pm. The meeting will be held upstairs. Everyone is welcome to attend, and we look forward to seeing you there.

Lastly, it's important to note that the EPA is not recommending bottled water for communities based solely on concentrations of these chemicals in drinking water that exceed the health advisory levels.

The State of Vermont has opened a hotline for residents with questions about PFAS. Please contact (802) 693-0206 or email [ANR.DWPFASInfo@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.DWPFASInfo@vermont.gov).

Respectfully,



Brandon Gulnick  
Water District Manager  
Weathersfield, Vermont

**ASCUTNEY WATER DISTRICT  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
PFAS IN PUBLIC DRINKING WATER**

- 1. What are PFAS?** PFAS are a large group of human-made chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products worldwide since the 1950s. There are hundreds of PFAS, including PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonic acid).
- a. PFAS do not occur naturally, but are widespread in the environment.
  - b. PFAS are found in people, wildlife, and fish all over the world. According to the CDC, more than 97% of the U.S. population has PFAS in their bodies.
  - c. Some PFAS can stay in people's bodies for a long time.
  - d. Some PFAS do not break down easily in the environment.

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health (VDPH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*

- 2. How can I be exposed to PFAS?** Products that contain PFAS include candy wrappers, shampoo, water resistant clothing, non-stick cookware, dental floss, nail polish, cleaning products, paints, sealants, and varnishes, pizza boxes, firefighting foam, eye makeup, microwave popcorn bags, stain resistant products, and fast-food packaging/wrappers. The list goes on to include sandwich wrappers, takeout containers, carpets, rugs, and furniture. You may be exposed to PFAS in drinking water, food, indoor dust, some consumer products, and workplaces (Vermont Department of Public Health).
- 3. Where is PFAS found?** According to the EPA, PFAS are found in water, air, fish, and soil at locations across the nation and the globe.

*Source: Environmental Protection Agency*

- 4. What do we know about PFAS right now?** We know that PFAS are everywhere in the environment. Scientists have the most information on PFOA and PFOS, but since the other PFAS are similar, they may have similar effects. PFOA and PFOS do not break down in soil. This means they can stay in the environment and contaminate drinking water sources even though they haven't been used in decades. PFOA and PFOS also don't break down in our bodies. It takes about two to four years for half the PFOA in your body to leave through your urine. It may take longer for other PFAS to leave your body.

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health*

5. **Does the EPA know all the Answers?** According to the EPA, the answer is no. EPA's researchers and partners across the country are working hard to answer critical questions about PFAS, which includes how to better and more efficiently detect and measure PFAS in our air, water, soil, and fish and wildlife, how much people are exposed to PFAS, how harmful PFAS are to people and the environment, how to remove PFAS from drinking water, and how to manage and dispose of PFAS.

*Source: Environmental Protection Agency*

6. **When does the State of Vermont consider the water unsafe to drink, prepare food, cook, brush teeth, prepare baby formula, wash fruits and vegetables, or any other manner or ingestion?** Although this does not apply to the Ascutney Water District at this time, when PFAS levels exceed 20ppt, the State of Vermont Department of Public Health states that we are not to use the water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth, preparing baby formula, washing fruits and vegetables, or any other manner of ingestion.

Do not use water containing the five PFAS over 20 ppt to water your garden. The PFAS could be taken up by the vegetables. Do not boil the water. Boiling water will not remove PFAS and may concentrate them. It's important to note that the Ascutney Water District is testing 2.15ppt at one (1) well source and 2.08 at our second well source. This is 17.85ppt and 17.92ppt lower than the state standard respectively. The State of Vermont has not issued a "Do Not Drink" in the Ascutney Water District, because we have not exceeded the MCL.

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health*

7. **Is it OK to shower or bathe if PFAS exceeds the State Standard?** Although this does not apply to the Ascutney Water District at this time, if our water system does exceed 20ppt, Normal showering and bathing are not likely to cause significant exposure to PFAS. Studies have shown very limited absorption of PFAS through the skin. Children are more likely to swallow water while playing in the bathtub. Try to limit the amount of water they swallow.

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health*

8. **Is it OK to breastfeed if PFAS exceeds the state standard?** The Health Department recommends that you continue to breastfeed your baby, as there are many benefits of breastfeeding.

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health*

- 9. Should I have my blood tested for PFAS?** We know that almost every American has PFAS in their blood. We know from scientific studies that if you drink water containing PFAS, you are likely to have PFAS in your blood at levels that are higher than most Americans. Studies have shown that once the exposure has stopped, the level of PFAS in the body will decrease over time. A blood test can't tell if your exposure to PFAS will cause health problems, or if a condition you have was caused by PFAS.

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health*

- 10. How can PFAS affect people's health?** Some scientific studies suggest that certain PFAS may affect different systems in the body. Although more research is needed, some studies in people have shown that certain PFAS may: affect growth, learning and behavior of babies and older children, lower a person's chance of getting pregnant, interfere with the body's natural hormones, increase cholesterol levels, affect the immune system, and increase the risk of cancer. These health effects may be the same for pets. If you are concerned, you can give your pet bottled water or water from a known safe source.

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health*

- 11. Should I see a health care professional?** If you are concerned about PFAS in your water, or if you or family members have signs or symptoms that you think are related to PFAS exposure, discuss your concerns with your family's health care professional.

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health*

- 12. If I have my own well, should I test for PFAS?** The Health Department recommends that all private well owners test their drinking water for naturally occurring contaminants, including bacteria, arsenic, and other elements. You can order the recommended testing kits A, C and RA from the Health Department laboratory by calling 1-800-660-9997 or 802-338-4724. You can also order test kits from other certified drinking water laboratories. Call DEC to determine if your well is in an area of concern at 802-828-1138.

*Source: Vermont Department of Health*

- 13. To find certified laboratories that test for naturally occurring contaminants as well as PFAS, use this map:** [ahs-vt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1814e5a1da074c69bf496caf4e24855](https://ahs-vt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1814e5a1da074c69bf496caf4e24855)

*Source: Vermont Department of Public Health*

**14. How can I learn more?** For more questions about the health effects of PFAS, call the Health Department at (802) 693-0206 or email [ANR.DWPFASInfo@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.DWPFASInfo@vermont.gov).

**15. What are we doing through the Ascutney Water District at a local level?**

- a. Partnering with a Water Quality Engineer: Although we are not eligible for emergency funding because we have not exceeded the MCL, we do qualify for a planning grant to determine how we can reduce our PFAS levels as a Water District. We are currently working with a Water Quality Engineer to apply to this program.
- b. Partnering with our neighboring towns: We are not unique to PFAS in Ascutney. We are partnering with our neighboring towns to share resources and information.
- c. Further Testing: We will continue to test our wells for PFAS to monitor for increases and decreases in PFAS levels.
- d. Public Meetings: We will continue to issue information to the public through direct mailings, social media, and public meetings at Martin Memorial Hall. Meeting notices will be posted on our website, on the bulletin outside at Martin Memorial Hall, and on the Library Bulletin. Unfortunately, the Ascutney Post Office is no longer permitting the Town to post our public meeting notices on the bulletin at the Post Office.

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