



SINCE 1844

ROCKAWAY TOWNSHIP

ROCKAWAY TOWNSHIP WATER DEPARTMENT

PFAS FAQs

This document is being written and posted to give customers information and insight as to what PFAS is and how it is being currently regulated. PFAS rules and regulations were recently adopted by the NJDEP on March 31st, 2020.

What is PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (“PFAS”) are a group of man-made chemicals that includes PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, GenX, and many others. PFAS has been manufactured and used in a variety of products that are commonly used in the US since the 1940s and until recently have been given new regulatory standards for water utilities to comply with. More specifically, the PFOA and PFOS compounds have been the most extensively produced and studied of these chemicals. Both chemicals are very persistent in the environment and in the human body and have been labeled as “forever chemicals” as they do not readily degrade or breakdown. They can accumulate over time and since they are not degradable begin to pool and increase in concentration in the groundwater supply. There is evidence that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects.

How long has this been in the water supply?

This is a difficult question to answer because PFAS is measured in extremely small concentrations. The three compounds that are currently regulated by the NJDEP are as follows: PFOA at 14 ppt, PFOS at 13 ppt, and PFNA at 13 ppt respectively. 1 ppt (part per trillion) is measured as 0.000000001 or 1×10^{-9} mg/L. To put this in perspective, this is equivalent to 1 drop of water in an Olympic sized pool. Significant improvements in technology and analytical equipment allow us to measure these contaminants at such a low concentration. Rockaway Township has been sampling and analyzing for these contaminants and continues to do its part to ensure that the water supply is in compliance. These “forever chemicals” were produced and dumped into the groundwater supply from chemical companies and unfortunately since they do not readily degrade could have been around for years.

What are likely sources of PFAS?

PFAS has been manufactured and implemented in everyday consumer items since the 1940s. They have been used in microwavable popcorn bag lining, cooking sprays, firefighting foams, hydrophobic chemical processes, and lots of other products. As previously stated, it is hard to identify where the point of contamination occurred as PFAS has been used in a lot of applications over the years. Rockaway Township is doing its due diligence into investigating the situation properly and to hold certain parties accountable to help pay for remediation.

What actions has Rockaway Township taken thus far to ensure compliance?

Rockaway Township has been sampling and analyzing all points of entry (POE) to the distribution system to ensure compliance with these newly regulated compounds. As of January 24, 2022 Rockaway Township was informed that the Fox Hills Treatment facility POE exceeded for PFOS with a result of 15.9 ppt. The regulatory standard for PFOS as per the NJDEP is 13 ppt.

Once notified, Rockaway Township Water Department shut off 2 of the 4 wells that were suspected of contamination. Follow up sampling was taken at the point of entry with those wells being off and found non detect levels being supplied to the distribution system. Rockaway Township has also been extensively looking into remediation for these 2 wells. The Water Department is trying to exhaust all options as to where the contamination is coming from to try to keep costs down on the taxpayers. More so, the Department has been using out of the box thinking such as testing the pipe dope/packing equipment used on pumps, bailing the aquifer to ensure the water supply is not contaminated, and looking into sanitary sealing parts of the well to ensure that we are only drawing water from the “clean” section of water. Alternatively, if these are not conclusive and cannot be fixed accordingly the Township will need to explore capital improvements to the treatment facility which could cost the town hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Capital improvements and projects are currently being designed and thought of for the other treatment facilities to try and stay ahead of these new regulations. The Rockaway Township Water Department has been extensively researching, planning, and budgeting its resources to try to ensure the town is supplied with the best drinking water quality as possible at the lowest rate.

Are there home filters that work to reduce PFOA and PFOS levels?

Granular activated carbon filtration, reverse osmosis, or a combination of the two have been found to reduce the levels of PFOA and PFOS. NSF International has certified certain home use drinking water treatment units that reduce PFOA and PFOS. For a list of NSF International-certified products, please consult the links below:

[Listing Category Search Page | NSF International](#)

NSF International was formerly known as the National Sanitation Foundation. It is a not-for-profit organization that provides public health and safety risk management solutions. Among those solutions, NSF International provides standards development and product certification.

Where can I learn more about PFAS?

Rockaway Township Water Department encourages its customers to visit the following resources for additional information:

New Jersey Department of Health

http://www.state.nj.us/health/ceohs/documents/pfas_drinking%20water.pdf

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

[NJDEP SRP - Emerging Contaminants](#)

Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry

<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/index.html>

USEPA

<http://www.epa.gov/pfas>

American Water Works Association

[PFAS | American Water Works Association \(awwa.org\)](#)