

PFAS FAQs

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This page will be updated as appropriate to reflect new information learned and received by Ridgewood Water, and to share answers to frequently asked questions Ridgewood Water receives from its customers.

Is my drinking water safe?

Ridgewood Water's source water is in compliance with all NJDEP rules and regulations for safe drinking water.

Results from multiple rounds of testing by Ridgewood Water measured levels well below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) health advisory levels for PFOA/PFOS. Voluntary testing is ongoing and intended to regularly reconfirm this status.

Ridgewood Water will work to maintain our compliance with New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) standards as they are finalized, and continue to report our monitoring results to NJDEP and our customers.

For any questions about health concerns potentially associated with PFAs levels measured in our water, please consult your healthcare provider.

Several highlights made clear to us by regulators are as follows:

- Both NJDEP existing and proposed standards, and EPA health advisory levels, are conservative by their nature.
- The levels in place and being considered for rule-making offer a margin of protection for individuals regardless of age, and are based on possible impacts on the single most vulnerable members of the population – for example fetuses and breastfed infants.
- The levels were also developed to be protective over an individual's lifetime of exposure to drinking water at these levels.
- Actions being taken within the state, by Ridgewood Water and other water purveyors are expected to continue to reduce levels of exposure.
- Exposure to PFAS is primarily through ingestion. Exposure to PFAS through other household uses, showering, bathing, laundry and dishwashing is not significant.

What are PFAS?

PFAS do not occur naturally, but are widespread and extremely persistent in the environment. They are man-made chemicals that have been used to make carpets, clothing, fabrics for furniture, paper packaging for food and other materials (e.g., cookware) resistant to water, grease or stains. They are also used for firefighting at airfields and in a number of industrial processes.

Are there standards for PFAS?

Currently, there are limited drinking water regulations or enforceable NJDEP maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for PFAS compounds. EPA health advisories are recommended guidance, not regulatory requirements, intended to offer health-protective advice to water systems in the absence of enforceable standards. To date, NJDEP has focused its efforts on three PFAS compounds: PFNA, PFOA, and PFOS. The MCL for PFNA is 13 parts per trillion, adopted on September 4, 2018. NJDEP has recently issued new guidance for PFOA and PFOS, and is in the process of pursuing a MCL for both. Information on the current status of this guidance and regulations can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/srp/emerging-contaminants>.

What were the levels of PFAS detected in Ridgewood Water’s Wells?

All levels are in Parts Per Trillion (ppt).

Contaminant	NJDEP Guidance	EPA Health Advisory Levels	Levels Detected in Ridgewood Water*
PFOA	14 (Proposed MCL) Updated in October 2017; previously 40 ppt.	70 ** (Non-enforceable guidance) Announced in May 2016	Range = 8.13 – 30.6 System Average = 21.78 (2 Rounds)
PFOS	13 (Proposed MCL) Updated in August 2018	70 ** (Non-enforceable guidance) Announced in May 2016	Range = ND – 13.9 System Average = 6.82 (2 Rounds)
PFNA	13 (MCL) Established on September 4, 2018	None Established	Range = 0.45 – 3.91 System Average = 1.38 (2 Rounds)

* Test results through July 2018

** EPA health advisory levels for PFOA and PFOS is a maximum of 70 ppt either individually, or combined.

How long have PFAS been in the water supply?

Significant improvements in analytical testing allow for water systems to identify and test for compounds at much lower levels than previously possible. As technology has advanced, contaminants we used to measure in the millions can now be measured in billions, or in some cases as low as the trillions. Enhanced testing capabilities now permit detection down to as low as 2 parts per trillion. As a result, unregulated contaminants that have been present in the water supply for years are only now being evaluated because of enhanced data collection and testing capabilities. For that reason, Ridgewood Water considers it imperative to participate in unregulated contaminant testing to proactively and continuously improve water quality and maintain safe drinking water standards.

What are the likely sources of the PFAS?

PFAS are man-made chemicals used to make carpets, clothing, fabrics for furniture, paper packaging for food and other materials resistant to water, grease or stains. They are also used for firefighting at airfields and in a number of industrial processes.

While Ridgewood Water is working to identify specific sources, we continue to strongly encourage NJDEP to take action to investigate possible sources so that our customers and rate-payers do not have to bear the burden alone for treating contamination caused by the actions and operations -- past or present -- of others.

How and when did Ridgewood Water become aware of this issue?

In May 2016, EPA announced plans for a health advisory limit of 70 parts per trillion (ppt), either combined or individually, for PFOA and PFOS. Ridgewood Water's United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Unregulated Contaminant Rule 3 (UCMR3), sampling results from 2014 and 2015 indicated that one of its 27 treatment plants (then active) had levels of PFOA and PFOS that, when combined, were above 70 ppt. In anticipation of the EPA guidance, Ridgewood Water proactively removed the treatment plant from the system and the water supply met all regulatory standards for drinking water when the guidance was set.

When, in late 2017, NJDEP notified Ridgewood Water of its plans to set a guidance value for PFOA, we voluntarily followed their recommended actions in preparation for the announcement. This included testing all treatment plants in the system for a suite of 14 PFAS compounds, including PFOA, PFOS and PFNA. Results indicate that low-levels of PFOA are widespread in the system, with 24 of 25 tested treatment plants measuring levels above the proposed NJDEP guidance value.

What actions has Ridgewood Water taken thus far to safeguard my drinking water?

- Shut down the Carr Treatment Plant, which had the greatest potential to introduce PFAS compounds into the system. A treatment system using granular activated carbon (GAC), a technology proven to effectively reduce PFAS compound levels, is anticipated to be complete by summer 2019, pending award of the construction contract in fall 2018.
- Evaluating alternate treatment methods, in an effort to reduce installation and maintenance costs related to future treatment.
- Monitoring quarterly to identify levels, and assess plants that should be targeted for future treatment investments.
- Following the science to determine likely PFAS sources, and potentially responsible parties who should be working to help address the levels.
- Communicating with wholesale providers about their PFAS levels and collaborating on solutions for treatment.
- Continuing to report levels and actions being taken to NJDEP and our customers.

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

Results from multiple rounds of testing by Ridgewood Water measured levels well below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) health advisory levels for PFOA/PFOS.

To further reduce levels of PFOA and PFOS, NSF International has certified certain home use drinking water treatment units that reduce PFOA and PFOS below the health advisory. For a list of NSF International-certified products, please consult the links below:

<https://www.wqpmag.com/nsf-intl-certifies-first-filters-reduce-pfoa-pfos?eid=216122962&bid=1602411>

<http://info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/Listings.asp?ProductFunction=P473%7CP>

<http://www.nsf.org/consumer-resources/>

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.

How can I have my tap water tested?

The following laboratories are identified by NJDEP as PFOA-certified for drinking water testing:

Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) Certified Laboratories				
In-State - Mercer County				
Lab Number	Lab Name	Contact Name	Contact Phone Number	Matrix Description
11036	NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	ZHIHUA (TINA) FAN	609-530-2803	Drinking Water
In-State - Ocean County				
Lab Number	Lab Name	Contact Name	Contact Phone Number	Matrix Description
SC006	SHEALY ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC.	WENDY PLESSINGER	803-227-3167	Drinking Water
Out Of State				
Lab Number	Lab Name	Contact Name	Contact Phone Number	Matrix Description
CA003	VISTA ANALYTICAL LABORATORY	MARTHA MAIER	916-673-1520	Drinking Water
CA005	TESTAMERICA SACRAMENTO	RUSSELL EVANS	916-374-4419	Drinking Water
CA008	EUROFINS EATON ANALYTICAL, LLC (MONROVIA)	NILDA COX	626-386-1170	Drinking Water
CO004	TESTAMERICA DENVER	PEGGY SLEEVI	303-736-0116	Drinking Water
FL002	SGS NORTH AMERICA INC. - ORLANDO	SVETLANA IZOSIMOVA	407-425-6700	Drinking Water
FL022	PACE ANALYTICAL SERVICES, LLC ORMOND BEACH FL	LYNN BAYLOR	386-676-4803	Drinking Water
IL457	AMERICAN WATER CENTRAL LABORATORY	WILLIAM DECKELMANN	618-222-4053	Drinking Water
IN598	EUROFINS EATON ANALYTICAL, LLC (SOUTH BEND)	DALE PIECHOCKI	574-472-5523	Drinking Water
MA007	CON-TEST ANALYTICAL LABORATORY	KATHERINE ALLEN	413-525-2332	Drinking Water
MA015	ALPHA ANALYTICAL	AMY RICE	508-898-9220	Drinking Water
MA015	ALPHA ANALYTICAL	JAMES TODARO	508-898-9220	Drinking Water
NC100	SGS NORTH AMERICA INC.	JEANNIE MILHOLLAND	910-350-1903	Drinking Water
PA007	AQUA PENNSYLVANIA INC	FRANK MEDORA	610-645-1036	Drinking Water
PA011	EUROFINS LANCASTER LABS ENVIRONMENTAL, LLC	DOROTHY LOVE	717-556-7327	Drinking Water
SC002	GEL LABORATORIES, LLC	NANCY D MATTERN	843-556-8171	Drinking Water
WA005	ALS ENVIRONMENTAL, KELSO	CARL DEGNER	360-501-3270	Drinking Water

Where can I learn more about PFAS?

Ridgewood Water 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

<https://www.nj.gov/dep/srp/emerging-contaminants/>

Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry

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

USEPA

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

I have a question that was not answered in this document. What should I do?

If you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to email waterquality@ridgewoodnj.net.