

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: March 18, 2016

CONTACT: Jim Martin, 603 271-3710

des.nh.gov

twitter.com/NHDES

NHDES Receives Initial Drinking Water Well Tests for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) in Southern New Hampshire

Concord NH - The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) has received the drinking water well test results from an initial round of testing for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) in Merrimack and Litchfield, New Hampshire. The test results show levels of PFOA from 17 to 820 parts per trillion. Test results from the Merrimack Village Water District ranged from 17 to 90 parts per trillion.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not set an enforceable drinking water standard for PFOA under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. EPA's Office of Water has, however, established a Provisional Health Advisory (PHA) of 0.4 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$) or 400 parts per trillion for PFOA. That level is set based upon short-term contact and the EPA is currently developing guidance for long-term exposure levels, which EPA is expected to release in the near future. Since EPA has not yet established a Health Advisory for lifetime exposure to PFOA, NHDES, out of an abundance of caution, has decided to provide bottle drinking water to locations using a private well for drinking water for human consumption that contains over 100 parts per trillion of PFOA. NHDES will reassess this situation once EPA provides more definitive guidance.

The Merrimack Village Water District public water supply wells all tested below both the PHA of 400 parts per trillion and the level at which NHDES determined it would be appropriate to initially provide bottled water. Based on this first round of testing, NHDES has initiated additional testing of drinking water wells in both Merrimack and Litchfield.

PFOA, a perfluorochemical (PFC), is part of a family of manmade chemicals that were used for decades as ingredients to make products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water, such as non-stick cookware, weather resistant outdoor clothing and gear, and stain resistant carpeting. Many chemicals in this group, including PFOA, are commonly present in the environment and do not break down easily.

Studies have shown that nearly all people have some level of PFCs in their blood. Potential health effects from exposure to low levels of PFCs are not well understood. To date studies have not provided consistent answers as to whether PFCs can affect growth and development, hormone levels including thyroid hormone, liver enzyme levels, cholesterol levels, immune function or occurrence of certain types of cancer.

NHDES and the Division of Public Health Services, in coordination with the Towns of Merrimack and Litchfield, invite the public to Public Information Meetings to be held in the Towns of Merrimack and

Litchfield to discuss the results of recent drinking water tests related to an investigation of the presence of PFOA in drinking water. Below is the meeting information:

Merrimack: (NOTE: UPDATED LOCATION)

Wednesday, March 23, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

James Masticola Upper Elementary School all-purpose room

26 Baboosic Lake Road, Merrimack, NH 03054

This meeting will be broadcast LIVE on Merrimack TV Ch 20

Litchfield:

Thursday, March 24, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

Litchfield Middle School cafeteria

19 McElwain Drive, Litchfield, NH 03052

For background, the investigation into the potential presence of perfluorochemicals (PFCs) in drinking water in Merrimack, began several week ago when Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics notified NHDES that perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) was detected at low levels [0.03 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$)] in samples taken from four water faucets within their Merrimack facility, which is served by the Merrimack Village District Water System. PFOA has been detected in the Hoosick Falls, NY, water supply and in some private wells in North Bennington, VT, near other Saint-Gobain facilities. Because materials containing PFOA have been used at the plant in Merrimack and out of an abundance of caution, Saint-Gobain voluntarily tested the water at its Merrimack facility and intends to test the groundwater at its facility.

For more information, please visit the NHDES website at www.des.nh.gov or call Jim Martin, NHDES at (603)-271-3710.

###

[DES Home](#) > [Media Center](#) >

Media Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DATE: March 4, 2016

CONTACT: Jim Martin, 603 271-3710

NHDES, Merrimack Village Water District, and Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Investigating Perfluorochemical Found in Drinking Water

Concord, NH - The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) is today announcing that it is working with the Merrimack Village District Water System (MVDWS) and Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics to investigate the potential presence of perfluorochemicals (PFCs) in drinking water in Merrimack. Late last week, Saint-Gobain notified NHDES that perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) was detected at low levels [0.03 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$)] in samples taken from four water faucets within their Merrimack facility, which is served by the Merrimack Village District Water System. Due in part to the lack of health effect studies, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not set an enforceable drinking water standard for PFOA. EPA's Office of Water has, however, established a Provisional Health Advisory of 0.4 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$) for PFOA. Sampling to date in Merrimack has not identified PFOA at levels above the Provisional Health Advisory level. Provisional Health Advisories reflect reasonable, health-based hazard concentrations above which action should be taken to reduce exposure to unregulated contaminants in drinking water. Currently, this Provisional Health Advisory is under review and is expected to be revised this spring.

PFOA has been detected in the Hoosick Falls, NY, water supply and in some private wells in North Bennington, VT, near other Saint-Gobain facilities. Because materials containing PFOA have been used at the plant in Merrimack and out of an abundance of caution, Saint-Gobain voluntarily tested the water at its Merrimack facility and intends to test the groundwater at its facility. NHDES will oversee this investigation and is also working closely with MVDWS and the Town of Merrimack to determine if PFOA is present in any of the MVDWS wells that cumulatively serve 25,000 customers in Merrimack. NHDES will also investigate private wells in the vicinity of the Saint-Gobain facility and the MVDWS wells to determine whether they have been affected.

PFCs are a family of manmade chemicals that have been used for decades as an ingredient to make products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water, such as non-stick cookware, weather resistant outdoor clothing and gear, and stain resistant carpeting. Many chemicals in this group, including PFOA, are commonly present in the environment and do not break down easily. According to the company, polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), which contains PFOA, has been used at the plant in Merrimack, by Saint-Gobain and previous facility owners.

Studies have shown that nearly all people have some level of PFCs in their blood. Potential health effects from exposure to low levels of PFCs are not well understood. To date studies have been inconclusive as to whether PFCs can affect growth and development, hormone levels including thyroid hormone, liver enzyme levels, cholesterol levels, immune function or occurrence of certain types of cancer. Further research is needed to determine whether PFCs can cause health changes in humans. The EPA states that existing evidence is too limited to support a strong link between PFCs and cancer in people.

The EPA has also done nation-wide sampling for PFCs as a preliminary step toward determining the need for national drinking water standards that would be enforceable under the Safe Drinking Water Act. In 2014, the wells in Merrimack that provide water to Saint-Gobain were tested and PFOA was detected once at 0.042 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$)(which is below the Provisional Health Advisory level), but was not detected in a subsequent sample. MVDWS is resampling those and their other wells in response to the detection of PFOA in water samples taken at Saint-Gobain. This testing is in addition to the routine water quality monitoring performed by MVDWS.

NHDES will work closely with MVDWS and the Town of Merrimack to ensure that residents are promptly informed of the results of the MVDWS well tests and any additional information resulting from the planned groundwater investigations being conducted by Saint-Gobain and NHDES. For additional information please contact Jim Martin at (603)-271-3710.

Select Language 