

EPA sets strict limit on PFAS 'forever chemicals' in US drinking water

April 10 2024, by Robin Foster



The Environmental Protection Agency announced Wednesday that it has

finalized a first-ever rule that will drastically lower the amount of PFAS, also known as "forever chemicals," in the nation's drinking water.

"Drinking water contaminated with PFAS has plagued communities across this country for too long," EPA Administrator Michael Regan said in an agency [news release](#) announcing the new rule. "That is why President Biden has made tackling PFAS a top priority, investing historic resources to address these harmful chemicals and protect communities nationwide."

Exposure to PFAS has been linked to various cancers, liver and heart issues, and immune and developmental damage to infants and children, the agency noted. The level of exposure is significant in the United States: A 2023 government study detected PFAS [in nearly half of the country's tap water](#).

The new rule, which requires utilities to reduce PFAS to the lowest level they can reliably be measured, should lower PFAS exposure for approximately 100 million people, the agency noted.

In addition to the new rule, the EPA also announced that nearly \$1 billion in new funding should help states and territories implement PFAS testing and treatment at [public water systems](#) and help owners of private wells address PFAS contamination.

While environmental experts and health advocates welcomed the news, [water utilities](#) warned the new rule will cost billions more than the EPA has estimated and fall hardest on small communities with fewer resources.

"For decades, the [chemical industry](#) has polluted our communities with toxic 'forever chemicals' and put our health at risk," Emily Scarr, director of U.S. PIRG Education Fund's Stop Toxic PFAS campaign,

said in a statement. "The EPA's new drinking water standards will help reduce exposure to these [toxic chemicals](#), but we need our state and national leaders to use every tool in their tool belt to protect our families from exposure to the entire class of PFAS. We need to phase out PFAS use, stop their discharge and require the chemical industry to clean up their mess."

Another environmental expert concurred.

"For decades, the American people have been exposed to the family of incredibly toxic 'forever chemicals' known as PFAS with no protection from their government. Those chemicals now contaminate virtually all Americans from birth. That's because for generations, PFAS chemicals slid off of every federal environmental law like a fried egg off a Teflon pan," Environmental Working Group President and Co-Founder Ken Cook said in the EPA news release.

Still, utility groups claimed the new rule will be cost-prohibitive and confusing to the public.

The new regulation is "going to throw [public confidence](#) in drinking water into chaos," Mike McGill, president of WaterPIO, a water industry communications firm, told the Associated Press.

Meanwhile, the industry group known as the American Water Works Association told the AP that it supports limits on PFAS in drinking water, but claims the EPA has underestimated the rule's high cost, and that will raise customers' water bills.

EPA officials said that up to 10% of the 66,000 public drinking water systems subject to this rule may have to reduce PFAS to meet the new standard.

All public water systems have three years to test for PFAS, and they must inform the public about how much PFAS were found in their drinking water, the EPA said. When PFAS levels exceed these standards, utilities must reduce PFAS in their drinking water within five years.

More information: Visit the EPA for more on [PFAS](#).

© 2024 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: EPA sets strict limit on PFAS 'forever chemicals' in US drinking water (2024, April 10)
retrieved 2 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-04-epa-strict-limit-pfas-chemicals.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.