



City of Woburn, Massachusetts

**Important Information for all Consumers Receiving Drinking Water from Our System  
Woburn Water Department has Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) above the  
Drinking Water Standard**

*This notice provides important information regarding your drinking water. Please translate it, speak with someone who understands it, or ask the contact below for a translation.*

**What Happened?**

We are providing this information because **our water system exceeded the PFAS6 drinking water standard for the period July through September 2021**. We are currently evaluating options for additional treatment to ensure the safety of our water supply.

**What Does This Mean?**

**This is not an emergency. If it had been, you would have been notified within 24 hours.** As our customer, you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we have done and are doing to address this situation.

**What PFAS Levels Have Been Detected in Your Drinking Water?**

On October 2, 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) promulgated a new drinking water regulation and maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L) for the sum of six per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (called PFAS6). A nanogram per liter (abbreviated as “ng/L”) is equivalent to a part per trillion (abbreviated as “ppt”). Compliance with the MCL is based on the quarterly average of monthly samples.

A summary of our latest results is provided below:

| PFAS6 Results – Water Treatment Plant |                |                     |                           |                 |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Quarterly Compliance Period           | Sampling Dates | PFAS6 Result (ppt)* | **Quarterly Average (ppt) | PFAS6 MCL (ppt) |
| Quarter 2, 2021                       | April 23       | 12.1                | 16                        | 20              |
|                                       | May 28         | 12.4                |                           |                 |
|                                       | June 15        | 23.8                |                           |                 |
| Quarter 3, 2021                       | July 26        | 25.3                | 24                        | 20              |
|                                       | August 5       | 27.6                |                           |                 |
|                                       | August 31      | 20.1                |                           |                 |
|                                       | September 24   | 20.1                |                           |                 |
|                                       | September 28   | 26.4                |                           |                 |

\* For reference, a “part per trillion” or “ppt” is a microscopic measurement for substances in the water and is equivalent to a single drop of water in the combined water volume of 20 Olympic size swimming pools.

\*\* Quarterly averages are calculated by adding the three-monthly sample results from within the quarter and dividing by three. If multiple samples are collected in the same month, then the samples shall be averaged to establish a single contaminant concentration for that month. If any sample result would cause the quarterly average to exceed the MCL, the PFAS6 MCL has been violated.

The average of the three months of July, August and September is 24 ppt, which is above the new MassDEP drinking water Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 20 ppt. To comply with the new drinking water regulations, we must provide you with this public notice. An MCL is the maximum permissible level of a contaminant in water which is delivered to any user of a public water system. In April 2021, the City began monitoring the treated for PFAS under the new MassDEP regulation. This information is also provided in the table above for your information.

**Some people who drink water containing these PFAS in excess of the MCL may experience certain adverse effects. These could include effects on the liver, blood, immune system, thyroid, and fetal development. These PFAS may also elevate the risk of certain cancers.** More information on PFAS, see the links below.

### What is PFAS6?

PFAS6 includes perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS), perfluorodecanoic acid (PFDA) and perfluoroheptanoic acid (PFHpA). PFAS are human-made chemicals that have been used in the manufacturing of certain fire-fighting foams, moisture and stain resistant products, and other industrial processes. Many PFAS compounds were used in common consumer products such as stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, water-resistant food wrappers and containers, and many others.

### What Should I Do?

**Consumers in a sensitive subgroup (pregnant or nursing women, infants, and people diagnosed by their health care provider to have a compromised immune system):**

- **Are advised not to consume, drink, or cook with water when the level of PFAS6 is above 20 ppt.**
- Are advised to use bottled water for drinking and cooking of foods that absorb water (like pasta).
- **For infant formula**, use bottled water or use formula that does not require adding water.
  - **Bottled water should only be used if it has been tested.** The Massachusetts Department of Public Health requires companies licensed to sell or distribute bottled water or carbonated non-alcoholic beverages to test for PFAS. See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/water-quality-standards-for-bottled-water-in-massachusetts#list-of-bottlers->

**For all other consumers not in a sensitive subgroup:**

- **If you are not in a sensitive subgroup**, you may continue to consume the water because the 20 ppt value is applicable to a lifetime consuming the water and shorter duration exposures present less risk.
- **If you have specific health concerns regarding your past exposure**, you should see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) link below and consult a health professional, such as your doctor.

### Steps you can take to reduce your intake:

Consider taking the following steps while actions are being implemented to address this issue:

- **For older children and adults (not in a sensitive subgroup)**, the 20 ppt value is applicable to a lifetime of consuming the water. For these groups, shorter duration exposures present less risk. However, if you are concerned about your exposure while steps are being taken to assess and lower the PFAS6 concentration in the drinking water, use of bottled water will reduce your exposure.

- **Home water treatment systems** that are certified to remove PFAS by an independent testing group such as NSF, UL, or the Water Quality Association may be effective in treating the water. These may include point of entry systems, which treat all the water entering a home, or point of use devices, which treat water where it is used, such as at a faucet. For information on selecting home treatment devices that are effective in treating the water for PFAS6 see weblinks listed below.
- **In most situations, the water can be safely used for washing foods, brushing teeth, bathing, and showering.**

**Please note: Boiling the water will not destroy PFAS6** and will somewhat increase its level due to evaporation of some of the water.

For more information see the weblinks listed below.

### **What is the City of Woburn Doing About PFAS?**

The City of Woburn is committed to submitting both short-term and long-term corrective action plans to MassDEP for review and approval. These will include the following actions, to provide our customers with quality drinking water:

- Continue to routinely sample our treated water and our individual source wells for PFAS6.
- Investigate potential options for removal of PFAS6 so that we can be ready to implement additional treatment of our water.
- Provide regular updates on the levels detected in our water supply.
- Install a bottle filling station for sensitive subgroup residents to obtain PFAS-free water. The details will be posted on our website when the station becomes available.

### **What are PFAS and How are People Exposed to Them?**

PFAS are fluorinated organic chemicals. Two PFAS compounds, PFOA and PFOS have been the most extensively produced and studied of these compounds. Many PFAS compounds were used in common consumer products such as stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, water-resistant food wrappers and containers, and many others. PFAS are contained in firefighting foams, which have been used in training exercises and to extinguish oil and gas fires at a variety of locations including airfields and military installations. PFAS are also used in several industrial processes and used to manufacture consumer products that are resistant to water, grease, or stains. Most uses of PFAS compounds were phased out 10 to 15 years ago and replaced with other compounds that are thought to pose fewer health risks. However, because PFAS were used in many consumer products, most people have been exposed to them.

While consumer products and food are the largest source of exposure to these chemicals for most people, drinking water can be an additional source of exposure in communities where these chemicals have contaminated water supplies. Such contamination is typically localized and associated with a specific facility, for example, an airfield where they were used for firefighting or a facility where PFAS were produced or used. However, as is the situation in Woburn, very low levels of human-made PFAS compounds are also found in drinking water supplies without a known source of contamination, as PFAS degrade very slowly and are commonly found in groundwater and soils.

### **What are the Health Advisory and Regulatory Levels for PFAS?**

In 2016, the EPA published a lifetime Health Advisory (HA) of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for the combination of two PFAS compounds – PFOS and PFOA – in drinking water. In 2021, EPA has taken

action to collect new data needed to improve understanding of PFAS and to begin to develop a national primary drinking water regulation for PFAS.

In December 2019, MassDEP amended the Massachusetts hazardous waste cleanup regulations (the Massachusetts Contingency Plan or “MCP”) to add Reportable Concentrations and cleanup standards for soil and groundwater to address sites contaminated with PFAS. The new standard for groundwater that is used (or could be used) for drinking water is 20 ppt for 6 PFAS compounds, which is consistent with the new drinking water regulatory limit described below.

In October 2020, MassDEP finalized a drinking water standard for public water systems, known as a Maximum Contaminant Level, for PFAS6. A Maximum Contaminant Level or MCL means the maximum permissible level of a contaminant in water which is delivered to any user of a public water system. Information on this effort, including information on stakeholder meetings, can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/development-of-a-pfas-drinking-water-standard-mcl>. The MCL is 20 ppt individually or for the sum of the concentrations of six specific PFAS compounds (PFOS, PFOA, PFNA, PFHxS, PFHpA, and PFDA) in drinking water. Some people who drink water containing PFAS in excess of the MCL may experience certain adverse effects. These could include effects on the liver, blood, immune system, thyroid, and fetal development. These PFAS may also elevate the risk of certain cancers. MassDEP and the CDC both note more research is needed and ongoing, and it is important to remember consuming water with PFAS6 does not mean adverse effects will occur.

### Where Can You Get More Information?

For more information on the City of Woburn’s water and the steps we are taking, please contact Anthony Blazejowski, 5 Cove St Woburn, MA 01801 781-897-5945, or email: [ablazejowski@cityofwoburn.com](mailto:ablazejowski@cityofwoburn.com)

You may also find more information on PFAS from the following sources:

- City of Woburn Water Department <https://www.woburnma.gov/government/water-department/pfas/>
- MassDEP Fact Sheet – PFAS in Drinking Water: Questions and Answers for Consumers <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massdep-fact-sheet-pfas-in-drinking-water-questions-and-answers-for-consumers/download>
- USEPA’s Drinking Water Health Advisories can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos>
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention’s Public Health Statement for PFOS and PFOA can be found at: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/index.html>
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health information about PFAS in Drinking Water: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-in-drinking-water>
- For additional information on possible health effects, you may contact the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Research and Standards, at 617-556-1165.

### This notice is being sent to you by:

PWS Name: City of Woburn Water Department

PWS ID#: 3347000

Date distributed: November 2021

*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.*