

EPA To Set Drinking Water Standards for PFOA and PFOS



- The American Chemistry Council supports the work underway by the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to establish standards for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA).
- **Development of national drinking water standards for the two most common per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) should give Americans greater confidence in the safety of the water they drink and help to eliminate some of the confusion caused by the patchwork of state actions that have been announced in recent months.**
- The SDWA standards, referred to as “maximum contaminant levels” or MCLs, are the maximum permissible level of a substance in drinking water that can be delivered to any user of a public water system.
- In developing MCLs, USEPA considers the potential health effects of a substance, the extent of exposure to the substance in drinking water, and the technology available to remove the substance.
- Although development of these SDWA standards will take some time, EPA currently has Lifetime Health Advisories (LHAs) of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and PFOS that are based on a robust review of the potential health effects of the substances conducted in 2016.
 - For reference, 1ppt is about the same as one drop of water in twenty Olympic-sized swimming pools
- These LHAs can serve as guidance to states and communities while the federal drinking water standards are developed.
- These LHAs can also be **a more effective alternative to state based initiatives which will likely be inconsistent from one another, may not reflect the best available science,** and therefore could potentially confuse the public and subsequently undermine the public’s trust in the safety of their water.



Background on PFOA and PFOS

- Manufacture of PFOA and PFOS was voluntarily eliminated in the United States several years ago. As a result, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that sampling has shown that the human exposure levels of these substances have dropped substantially.
- Moreover, a national survey of drinking water conducted by USEPA from 2013-15 indicated that less than 2 percent of public drinking water supplies in the U.S. had detectable levels of PFOA and PFOS.
- Even using more sophisticated analytical methods that allow for even lower levels of detection, **sampling in several states conducted in 2019-2020 also demonstrated non-detectable levels of PFAS in over 90 percent of samples.**



- PFAS are a large group of substances with a wide variety of physical, chemical, and biological properties.
- PFOA and PFOS are the most well-known PFAS for which the potential health and environmental effects have been well studied.
- Research into the need to develop regulations for other PFAS, or groups of PFAS, is ongoing at U.S. EPA.
- ACC will continue to work on behalf of our members on strong, science based regulations that are protective of the public health and our environment and that continue to provide consumers with the important products they rely on.

