

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

Deferral Issued for PFOA, PFOS and 1,4-Dioxane at the Water Authority of Western Nassau County

Why are you receiving this notice/information?

You are receiving this notice because testing of our public water system found the chemicals perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and 1,4-Dioxane in your drinking water. This is above New York State's maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA, 10 ppt for PFOS and 1 part per billion (ppb) for 1,4-Dioxane in public drinking water systems. The MCL is set well below levels known or estimated to cause health effects. Consuming drinking water with PFOA, PFOS or 1,4-Dioxane at or somewhat above the MCL does not pose a significant health risk. Your water continues to be acceptable for all uses. The Water Authority of Western Nassau County is working on a strict timetable to reduce levels below the MCL.

The Water Authority of Western Nassau County has submitted, and the New York State Department of Health (Department) has issued, a deferral to the Water Authority of Western Nassau County. When a public water system is issued a deferral, the water system agrees to a schedule for corrective action and compliance with the new MCLs. In exchange, the Department agrees to defer enforcement actions, such as assessing fines, if the water district is meeting the established deadlines. We are required to update the Department and the Nassau County Department of Health each calendar quarter on the status of our projects. If we do not meet the agreed upon deadlines, the Department can resume enforcement.

What are the health effects of PFOA/PFOS?

The available information on the health effects associated with PFOA and PFOS, like many chemicals, comes from studies of high-level exposure in animals or humans. Less is known about the chances of health effects occurring from lower levels of exposure, such as those that might occur in drinking water. As a result, finding lower levels of chemicals in drinking water prompts water suppliers and regulators to take precautions that include notifying consumers and steps to reduce exposure.

PFOA and PFOS has caused a wide range of health effects when studied in animals that were exposed to high levels. Additional studies of high-level exposures of PFOA and PFOS in people provide evidence that some of the health effects seen in animals may also occur in humans. The most consistent findings in animals were effects on the liver and immune system and impaired fetal growth and development. The United States Environmental Protection Agency considers PFOA and PFOS as having suggestive evidence for causing cancer based on studies of animals exposed to high levels of this chemical over their entire lifetimes.

At the level of PFOA and PFOS detected in your water, exposure from drinking water and food preparation is well below PFOA and PFOS exposures associated with health effects.

What are the health effects of 1,4-dioxane?

Laboratory studies show that 1,4-dioxane caused liver cancer in animals exposed at high levels throughout their lifetime. Other types of cancer have also been reported, although less consistently than liver cancer. There is no evidence of 1,4-dioxane cancer effects in humans. The United States Environmental Protection Agency considers 1,4-dioxane a likely human carcinogen based upon studies of animals exposed to high levels of this chemical over their entire lifetimes.

At the level of 1,4-dioxane detected in your water, exposure from drinking water and food preparation is well below 1,4-dioxane exposures associated with health effects.

What is New York State doing about PFOA, PFOS and 1,4-Dioxane in public drinking water?

The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) has adopted a drinking water regulation that requires all public water systems to test for PFOA, PFOS and 1,4-dioxane. If found above the MCLs, the water supplier must take steps to lower the level to meet the standard. Exceedances of the MCL signal that steps should be taken by the water system to reduce contaminant levels.

What is being done to remove these contaminants?

The Water Authority has implemented an action plan and has already installed four (4) PFOA/PFOS Removal treatment systems and one (1) 1,4 Dioxane and PFOA/PFOS Removal treatment system. These five (5) treatment removal systems were installed under “emergency contracts” and are all operational. The Water Authority has substantially completed another 1,4 Dioxane and PFOA/PFOS removal treatment system, however, the treatment system is still undergoing performance testing to ensure that the water quality meets or exceeds all NYS water quality standards. Had this latest treatment system been placed into operation, the Water Authority would not have needed to renew this deferral. Once this system receives “approval to operate”, the Water Authority will be able to address the remaining facilities that require 1,4 Dioxane and PFOA/PFOS removal systems.

The Water Authority continues to make every effort to operationally minimize the concentration of 1,4-dioxane, PFOA and PFOS in the distribution system at any given time. Additional information will be shared as further testing and progress occurs. This process is similar for any chemical detected in public drinking water that requires mitigation. The compliance timetable will ensure that your drinking water will meet the MCL as rapidly as possible. The deferral renewal is effective until August 25, 2023.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, please contact Michael J. Tierney at (516) 327-4100 or by mail at Water Authority of Western Nassau County, 1580 Union Turnpike, New Hyde Park, NY 11040. You can also contact the Nassau County Health Department at (516) 227-9692.

If you have additional questions about these contaminants and your health, talk to your health care provider who is most familiar with your health history and can provide advice and assistance about understanding how drinking water may affect your personal health.

Public Water System ID# NY2902830

Date September 7, 2022