



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Health Department responds to EPA Health Advisorie impacting north Alabama water systems

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health is working with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) and federal agencies to determine any potential hazards related to perfluorinated compounds in drinking water in eight north Alabama water systems.

On May 19, 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a final health advisory for perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). These compounds are man-made chemicals that resist heat, oil, stains, grease and water. They are found in products such as nonstick cookware, carpet protection products, firefighting foams, and waterproof clothing.

PFOS and PFOA in drinking water are usually from facilities that manufactured these compounds and industries that used them in their manufacturing processes. Water systems in Alabama where tests have shown concentrations of PFOS and PFOA to be above the newly released health advisory level are as follows:

- West Morgan-East Lawrence Water Authority
- Gadsden Water Works and Sewer Board
- Centre Water and Sewer Board
- V.A.W. (Vinemont Anon West Point) Water Systems Inc.
- West Lawrence Water Co-op
- Northeast Alabama Water District
- Rainbow City Utilities Board
- Southside Water Works and Sewer Board

According to the EPA, the final health advisory is based on scientific studies and was developed to protect sensitive populations such as pregnant women, breast-fed infants and formula-fed infants whose formula is prepared with tap water. The health effects of exposure in the general

population are not totally clear at this time, but the health advisory level will be protective for them as well.

EPA's health advisories recommend that pregnant and breast-feeding mothers served by the identified water systems consider using alternate sources of drinking water. EPA further states that for formula-fed infants, it is advisable to consider using formula that does not require adding water. Other people served by these systems may also consider these steps.

Exposure to PFCs in drinking water is primarily from ingestion. PFCs are **not** removed from water by boiling. Other household uses of water such as showering, bathing, laundry and dishwashing are not a concern.

For the last three years, the levels of PFOS, PFOA and emerging contaminants in surface water have been monitored in all drinking water systems serving more than 10,000 people and in selected systems serving fewer people. ADPH will continue to review all studies and recommendations related to ingestion of these chemicals through public water supplies.

ADEM is working with the named water systems to collect additional monitoring data where appropriate and to identify methods to reduce the water concentration of PFCs to a level below the final health advisory recommendation.

State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller said, "We continue to use the best information available to make recommendations to protect the public."