



FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Bulletin #17, Fire Apparatus Decontamination of PFAS, April 2, 2021

Identify your fire department's present foam in your apparatus. If it is fluorine-free firefighting foam, you are good to go. If it is a fluorinated firefighting foam product which includes C6 products, you will need to remove, clean / decontaminate the apparatus and dispose of the fluorinated firefighting foam(s) properly.

Best to worst

- Replace the entire fire apparatus and all the equipment¹
- "Clean" the apparatus tank properly and capture the contaminant effluent for proper disposal
- Never put new fluorine-free foam into an apparatus tank that contains fluorinated firefighting foam

"... [the] Department of Defense (DoD) has learned from previous foam transitions that fully removing foams containing PFOS or PFOA from current systems will likely require replacement of almost every component of Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) vehicles."² It is believed the military came up with the simple three wash and dump it for Aqueous Film-Forming Foam (AFFF) removal. The process involves driving the apparatus around making hard left and right hand turns along with fast stopping to hopefully slosh the fluorinated foam from within the foam tank. This is far from adequate.

It has been "reported that Melbourne had to develop a 32 step washing programme to clean their equipment."³ Testing is critical to assure that fluorine levels are below a necessary level when complete.

Final USEPA regulatory determinations of PFOS and PFOA under the Safe Drinking Water Act occurred in February 2021. Michael Regan is the new USEPA Administration. In March 2021, on the same day of his confirmation, "Draft drinking water regulations were added to the *Federal Register*."⁴ This and increasing state regulations will be impacting fire departments who use fluorinated firefighting foam products.

1 Department of Defense, Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Task Force, Progress Report, March 13, 2020, https://media.defense.gov/2020/Mar/13/2002264440/-1/-1/1/PFAS_Task_Force_Progress_Report_March_2020.pdf

2 ibid.

3 ECHA, The Uses of PFAS and fluorine-free alternatives in fire-fighting foams, Final Report, 16 Oct 2019, p. 231 https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/28801697/pfas_flourine-free_alternatives_fire_fighting_en.pdf/d5b24e2a-d027-0168-cdd8-f723c675fa98

4 PFAS Drinking Water Regulations: Full Steam Ahead Under Regan, *The National Law Review*, March 16, 2021 <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/pfas-drinking-water-regulations-full-steam-ahead-under-regan>

Foam Exposure Committee
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Kirtland Air Force Base firefighters with the 377th Civil Engineer Squadron assisted in a mutual aid incident to a fire at Friedman Recycling in Albuquerque, New Mexico on September 29, 2020. If AFFF or AR-AFFF foams have been run through hose lines, they likely cannot be cleaned or decontaminated thoroughly enough and will need to be replaced.



Hose stand at the Greentown Volunteer Fire Department in Greentown, Indiana. Photo taken during the firehouse visit when firefighting foam samples were obtained for the Foam Exposure Committee project. Photo by Vicki Quint