



FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Bulletin #19, The Never-Ending Problems of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF), April 16, 2021

2,337 sites in the US have been identified with PFAS contamination. Testing will reveal far more.¹ There are 704 military sites in the US that contain PFAS, “a number that continues to rise.”² Fire departments and military bases are the major suppliers of known PFAS contaminations.

Australia has been through the PFAS problems and the issues of proper disposal as well as the hazards to populations.³ The US military attempted a program to burn Aqueous Film-Form Foam (AFFF) supplies. Burning a ‘forever’ chemical is a problem. In “the toxic fallout of the burning AFFF, this militarized operation gained a new definition: gross negligence.”⁴

Complete clean out of fire apparatus can cost from \$660 to \$35,000 per vehicle. You get what you pay for. The cost to completely replace fire engines with new apparatus and equipment because of AFFF contamination should get every fire department’s attention because this is a distinct possibility.

The foam industry has been the advisers to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) on firefighting foams. Because the impact of risk assessment has changed with testing knowledge, the fire service now has attorneys, insurance companies and environmental groups all involved in the PFAS AFFF issue. And, the firefighters themselves have been unaware of the toxicity issues associated with AFFF.

Fire chiefs are not particularly fond of a city administrator or mayor telling them what to do in their fire department or even by their own citizens. But, with the known contamination of citizens’ drinking water sources by PFAS, this is what is now occurring nationwide.

- 1 [PFAS Contamination in the US, Mapping the PFAS Contamination Crisis: New Data Show 2,337 Sites in 49 States, Jan 6, 2021, https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/pfas_contamination/](https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/pfas_contamination/)
- 2 [The Guardian, The US military is poisoning communities across the US with toxic chemicals, David Bond, 25 Mar, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/25/us-military-toxic-chemicals-us-states](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/25/us-military-toxic-chemicals-us-states)
- 3 [Environmental Management of Firefighting Foam, Nigel Holmes, Senior Principal Advisor Incident Management, , Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee, CFA Fiskville Inquiry, Oct 2015, https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/enrc/Fiskville_training_college/transcripts/Presentations/Nigel_Holmes_Presentation.pdf](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/enrc/Fiskville_training_college/transcripts/Presentations/Nigel_Holmes_Presentation.pdf)
- 4 [The Guardian, The US military is poisoning communities across the US with toxic chemicals, David Bond, 25 Mar, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/25/us-military-toxic-chemicals-us-states](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/25/us-military-toxic-chemicals-us-states)

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THE SCIENCE TAKE

Scientists have been working tirelessly on the problems that PFAS chemicals have brought onto citizens worldwide. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances are made from “Fluorine: The Element From Hell.”¹

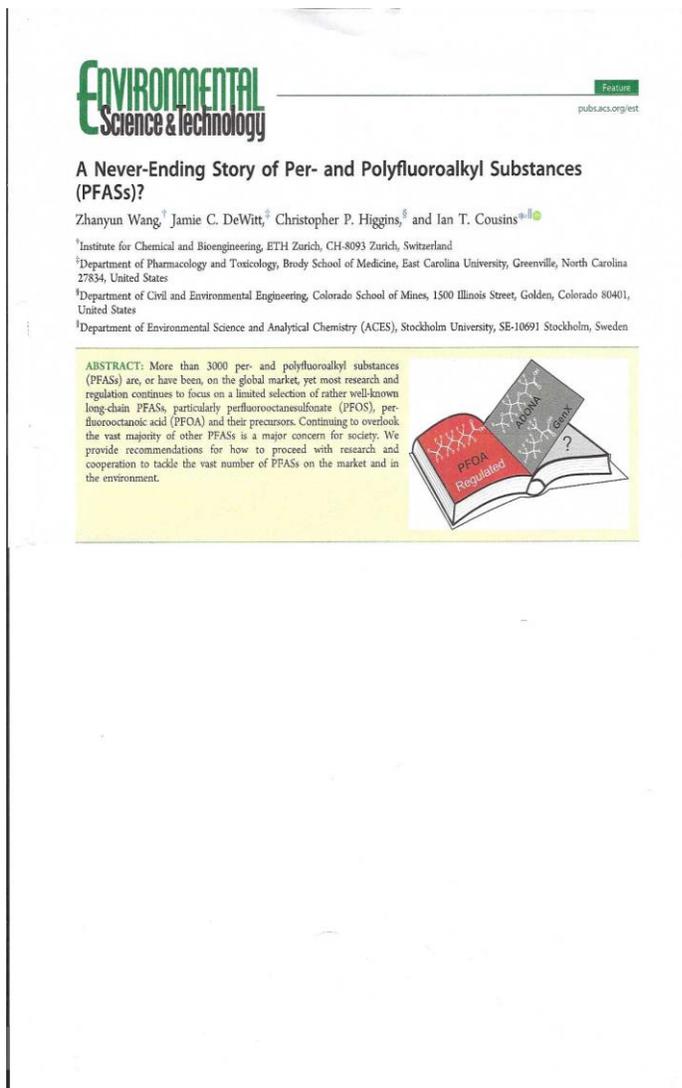
In 2019, Dr. Linda Birnbaum, retired director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), stated “We’ve known for 40 years that you don’t want to make chemicals that never go away, so why are we making chemicals that never go away?”²

“It doesn’t get any more straightforward than that.”³

1 American Council on Science and Health, “Fluorine: The Element From Hell,” Josh Bloom, February 14, 2016, <https://www.acsh.org/news/2016/02/14/fluorine-element-hell>

2 North Carolina Health News, Greg Barnes, Linda Birnbaum retires from NIEHS, but don’t expect her to fade away, Dec 9, 2019, <https://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2019/12/09/linda-birnbaum-retires-from-niehs-but-dont-expect-her-to-fade-away/>

3 *ibid.*



The never-ending problems of AFFF / PFAS