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## FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

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Bulletin #36, Monitoring PFAS Exposure in Fire Service Personnel, September 10, 2021

There is growing awareness and concern for the fire service and their exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). This concern has led to several research efforts to study and better understand sources of exposure, the extent of exposure, and the health effects. As initiated by Congress, there are efforts underway to remove these chemicals from firefighting foams and the turnout gear worn by firefighters.

Not only can fire service personnel be exposed to these chemicals through their occupation, PFAS are commonly found in a wide range of consumer products. Exposure to PFAS is associated with cancer risk, thyroid disease, ulcerative colitis, elevated cholesterol, respiratory disease, decreased fertility and a reduced immune response which has gained notable attention during the current pandemic conditions.

Biomonitoring describes the monitoring of chemicals, such as toxins, in the human body to assess exposure from the environment. The data are used to determine which chemicals are getting into people's bodies, track exposure trends, and monitor people with chemicals at a level above a toxicity limit or a level of concern. This is different than a clinical test a doctor might prescribe to provide a diagnosis and treatment plan. There is currently no diagnosis or treatment recommendations specific to elevated PFAS levels. There are, however, recommendations for ways to limit or reduce exposure to PFAS chemicals.

For those who live in a community that is conducting biomonitoring you are encouraged to participate in those ongoing studies. For fire service personnel and any private citizen that is interested in having their blood tested for PFAS, they can access these services through private laboratories.

Testing for PFAS in blood is traditionally done using serum which requires a blood draw from a phlebotomist or other healthcare practitioner. Although this type of test does not require a doctor's order to obtain, it may be required by a health insurer for reimbursement purposes.

Beginning in October 2021, an at-home test kit will be available to order and have delivered direct to your home. This is a self-administered test, using a simple finger prick. The sample is dropped in the mail using the return mailer provided with the test kit. For fire personnel looking to test their exposure directly, this is an easy and accessible option to deploy at the fire house any time of day. Similar to the serum test, this kit does not require a doctor's order but may be required for reimbursement from a health insurer.

For anyone interested in obtaining results for PFAS levels in their blood please contact:

Eurofins  
Contact: Debby Wilson  
[PFAStesting@eurofinset.com](mailto:PFAStesting@eurofinset.com)

Foam Exposure Committee  
Contact: Vicki Quint, Quint LLC  
[codepfas@gmail.com](mailto:codepfas@gmail.com)  
C. 262-794-7226

## **Summary of Biomonitoring and Ongoing Research Programs**

The **Michigan Department of Health and Human Services** (DHHS) announced the launch of the PFAS in Firefighters of Michigan Surveillance (PFOMS) project, a multi-year \$1 million biomonitoring effort to assess firefighter exposure to the “forever chemicals.” The state of Michigan is taking blood samples from firefighters as part of a project to study how much exposure they receive to toxic PFAS chemicals.

[https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71548\\_54783\\_54784\\_102116\\_102118--\\_00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71548_54783_54784_102116_102118--_00.html)

To advance knowledge on exposure to PFAS chemicals and the associated health risks, researchers from the **University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health** received a \$1.5 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to lead a study of occupational exposures among firefighters.

<https://publichealth.arizona.edu/news/2020/public-health-researchers-study-health-risk-chemicals-firefighter-foam>

A committee appointed by the **National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine** is working to provide the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (CDC/ATSDR) and the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) with a review of current evidence regarding human health effects of those PFAS being monitored in the CDC’s National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals. This study will provide advice for clinicians about PFAS testing and how test results should inform clinical care. Additionally, the committee will examine the health outcomes associated with PFAS exposure and will develop principles clinicians can use to advise patients on exposure reduction.

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/guidance-on-pfas-testing-and-health->

The **PFAS-Exchange** is part of a multi-year project called PFAS-REACH (Research, Education, and Action for Community Health) funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. PFAS-REACH will provide new scientific evidence on the health effects associated with exposure to PFAS—information that could be used to inform new policies and drinking water guidelines that protect the public, in particular vulnerable populations, from these harmful pollutants. Furthermore, through its public outreach and engagement activities, the project aims to support communities across the nation by offering them new tools and information to help them reduce their exposures and safeguard their health. <https://pfas-exchange.org/about-us/>