

Drinking Water Update

- Low levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have been detected within water tested by the First District Water Department (FDWD).
- The water is safe to drink, and the levels that have been found are much lower than what would trigger a concern for the health of the community.
- Read below for more information on PFAS and what has been done in Norwalk to proactively address it.

What are PFAS?

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that have been used in a variety of products, including non-stick cookware, food packaging, upholstered furniture, clothing, and firefighting foam. They have been manufactured and used in the United States since the 1940s. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) have been the most extensively produced and studied of these chemicals.

What is the Drinking Water Standard?

There is no federal enforceable standard (Maximum Contaminant Level or MCL) for any chemical in the PFAS family. However, the EPA issued a Health Advisory in 2016 for PFOS and PFOA of 70 parts per trillion (ppt). This target concentration in a water sample is for either contaminant alone or for the sum of the two. The Connecticut Department of Public Health has developed a drinking water action level of 70 ppt for the sum of five PFAS chemicals.

What were the PFAS results?

70 ppt

EPA Health Advisory Level
for PFAS

3 to 13 ppt

First District Water within
the Distribution System

		Detection Limit	Treated Surface Water	Treated Well Water
PFAS tested in 2018		ppt	ppt	ppt
PFOS	Perfluorooctanesulfonic Acid	<4	ND	12
PFOA	Perfluorooctanoic Acid	<2	5	7
PFNA	Perfluoronanoic Acid	<2	ND	10
PFHXS	Perfluorhexanesulfonic Acid	<3	ND	6
PFHPA	Perfluoroheptanoic Acid	<2	ND	3
Total (of 5 that contribute to health advisory)			5	38

Source: [First District Water Department 2018 Annual Water Quality Report](#)

ND= non detect, results below the detection limit

The water from the five wells are treated and mixed at the well field. The well field water is then combined with the surface water before being delivered to customers. In the past six months the well water has been only 2% of the total water produced.



Public Health
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Norwalk Health Department

July 2019

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Why did the First District Water Department test for PFAS?

This past year, the CT Department of Public Health required all large public water systems to evaluate the potential risks of PFAS contamination to their drinking water supply. CT DPH also recommended testing for PFAS in areas of higher risk.

What has been done to protect water quality?

Since the first results were received, the FDWD has adopted operational rules to minimize use of the wells and has taken several wells off line. The FDWD will continue to monitor and sample for PFAS.

What are the health effects?

The main health concerns regarding PFOS, PFOA and related PFAS come from studies in laboratory animals. The health advisory limits are set to protect people from the most sensitive effects, which are developmental (e.g. growth, low birth weight). PFAS may also reduce immune system function and decrease the response to vaccines. Exposure to these chemicals at higher concentrations may cause other health problems, including an increase in cholesterol levels, liver and thyroid problems, and an increased risk for testicular and kidney cancer. While studies of human populations exposed to elevated levels of PFOS and PFOA generally support the effects seen in animals, the evidence in humans is evolving and remains unclear at present.

About the Water Systems in Norwalk

There are two public water systems within our city: the First Taxing District Water Department and the Second Taxing District / South Norwalk Electric and Water (SNEW). For a map of the services areas, [click here](#).

The First District Water Department (FDWD) owns and maintains four reservoirs and five wells. The reservoirs are located in primarily residential areas in Lewisboro, NY, and Ridgefield, Wilton and New Canaan. These four reservoirs supply, on an average year, most of the water delivered to customers. The surface water from the reservoirs is supplemented during droughts and times of peak demand by the five wells at the Kellogg-Deering Well Field.

The South Norwalk Electric and Water (SNEW) water supply comes from four reservoirs located in Wilton and New Canaan. PFAS were not detected in their reservoirs during preliminary testing in 2014. SNEW does not use any ground water sources.

Where can I get more information?

- [First District Water Department \(FDWD\)](#)
- [South Norwalk Electric and Water \(SNEW\)](#)
- [Connecticut Department of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry](#)
- [Norwalk Health Department](#)