



Washington State Department of Health Office of Drinking Water

PFAS Update: We are excited to announce that after four years of hard work and coordination with utilities, communities, and other state and federal partners the Washington State Board of Health approved updates to Drinking Water Regulations for Group A Water Systems Chapter 246-290 WAC.

These updates helped clarify processes by which the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) addresses unregulated contaminants in public water systems. It also establishes PFAS state action levels (SALs) that require water systems to test for PFAS compounds and report to the state and their customers if PFAS detections exceed SAL concentrations.

These rules support public health by ensuring testing is completed at specific utilities across the state to understand risk areas to customers. It also supports utilities impacted by PFAS by using science-based rulemaking that enables:

- Ecology to address contamination by establishing cleanup standards and legal mechanisms in place.
- DOH to gather information for potential state maximum contaminant level (MCL) determinations in drinking water, establishing levels at which utilities must treat the water.

Thanks to everyone who participated in this process, making this rule better. Due to comments received, we made many rule improvements through clarifying language, including processes to establish MCLs and SALs. We also updated the Lab Rule (WAC 246-390) and coordinated closely with Ecology to ensure DOH rule language aligns with Ecology efforts.

We are working to fund PFAS testing for utilities. We are also working with EPA on the details for laboratories to provide test kits very soon to water systems that volunteered for sampling. We don't expect to find

additional systems with detections over the SAL, but we won't really know until we test.

Staffing: Our hope to get back to our normal work schedules did not develop as we wanted. We continue to support our agency's first priority: the state's COVID-19 pandemic response.

We again ask for your patience. Many of our staff members are still engaged in COVID-19 response activities. The pandemic has changed a lot in a short time. Staff members retired or left to pursue other dreams. We are reassessing our work environment, including continuing to telework, looking at changing office space, and moving to a paperless environment. We are also dealing with mental fatigue and supporting our staff to take time off to recharge.

We continue to provide coverage of essential duties, such as responding to drinking water emergencies. Routine business is happening at a scaled back pace. Planning and design reviews, pre-plan meetings, sanitary surveys field visits and reports, technical assistance, and complaint response are all taking much longer. There are delays in sending out reminders, late notices, and invoices. Emphasis has been on acute compliance; other violation letters are delayed. Data entry and management are delayed. We continue looking for opportunities to support our operators with limited resources. We acknowledge that our overall level of service is not what it used to be.

We ask for your patience and commitment supporting the mental and physical health of our drinking water community, knowing your regulatory requirements, and not waiting to communicate with our office. If you need support or tools, please reach out to our office staff. We want you to know we're doing our best to support you and our common mission of "Safe and Reliable Drinking Water."

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