

# La Crosse Water Utility

## 2023 Water Quality Report

D I S T R I B U T E D J U N E 2 0 2 4

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST FOUND IN THIS REPORT:

- Health Information
- How to protect our water
- Cross Connection Control
- Water Quality
- Hydrant Flushing and Hydrant Use
- Conservation

### YOUR WATER UTILITY

The La Crosse Water Utility is made up of and maintains:

- 13 Wells
  - \* 10 In service
  - \* 3 Inactive
- 2 Reservoirs
- 221.5 Miles of Water Main
- 3,118 Valves
- 16,813 Services
- 2,022 Fire Hydrants
- 16,419 Meters

## Our Water Supply

The La Crosse Water Utility is pleased to present you with its annual Water Quality Report that provides a complete summary of water quality information from 2023. We are committed to providing safe, high-quality, and dependable drinking water supply. We have an extensive water quality monitoring and treatment program in accordance with Federal and State laws.

All water supplied to City of La Crosse is groundwater, drawn by wells from an unconsolidated sand and gravel aquifer approximately 170 feet below the City. The aquifer is an impressive source of water, easily producing millions of gallons of water daily. The Water Utility operates ten active high capacity wells which range in depth between 100 to 160 feet deep and have pumping capacities up to 3,500 gallons per minute (gpm).

Water use in the city of La Crosse averaged 9.9 million gallons per day (MGD) in 2023, as compared to 9.8 MGD in 2022. Maximum water production in 2023 was 18.1 MGD on June 6th. The City's all-time maximum production of 37.3 MGD occurred on June 6th, 1988.



**Hydrant Flushing**  
Insuring the integrity of the water system and providing high quality water

Normal water pressure to La Crosse customers ranges between 35 and 120 psi. A water system study completed in 1999 indicated that the existing water supply system has adequate capacity to meet projected demands for water at

least through the year 2023. A new study is currently underway to be completed in 2024. Fluoride and chlorine are added to the water as it is pumped into the distribution system. City-wide, in 2023 fluoride and chlorine dosages from all City wells averaged 0.71 PPM and 1.03 PPM, respectively. The Water Utility also doses a polyphosphate additive at seven wells to control problems related to manganese in the water. For the seven treated wells, in 2023 polyphosphate dosage at these wells averaged .83 PPM of total phosphate. Samples from the water distribution system in 2023 averaged 0.05 PPM of total phosphorus.

We are proud to report that our drinking water is safe and meets all Federal and State requirements.

In order to maintain a safe and dependable water supply, the Utility continually makes improvements to benefit all of its customers. This includes replacing old water mains, fire hydrants, service lines and valves.

## Who oversees the Water Utility

The La Crosse Water Utility operates under the direction of the City's Board of Public Works and Common Council. The Board of Public Works meets each Monday at 10:00am, and considers a wide variety of issues related to Water Utility operations. Agendas for Board of Public Works meetings are posted in City Hall, and are also available on the City's Web Site: [www.cityoflacrosse.org](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org).

If you have questions regarding this report or concerning the La Crosse water system, please call:  
**Tina Erickson, Utilities Finance and Compliance Manager**  
400 La Crosse Street, La Crosse, WI 54601 (608-789-7536).

Daim ntawv qhia no muaj cov ntaub ntawv tseem ceeb txog koj cov dej haus.  
Kom ib tug neeg txhais lus rau koj, los yog tham nrog ib tug neeg to taub.

Este informe contiene información importante acerca de su agua potable. Haga que alguien lo traduzca para usted, o hable con alguien que lo entienda.

Visit the Water Utility webpage online at [www.cityoflacrosse.org/utilities](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org/utilities) for more information.

# Important Health Information

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791), or by visiting their Office of Water website at [www.epa.gov/OW](http://www.epa.gov/OW).

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the

general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the environmental protection agency's Safe

Water Drinking Hotline (800-426-4791).

The La Crosse Water Utility vigilantly tests and monitors the City's water supply to assure the end quality to consumers. Test results have detected some contaminants. The Water Quality Data Table section of this report provides information showing that all water quality criteria met or exceeded Federal and State requirements in 2023. **The EPA has determined that City of La Crosse water is safe at the levels detected.**

## Substances That Could Be in Water

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, springs, reservoirs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and substances resulting from the presence of animals or human activity.

To ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the U.S. EPA prescribes regulations limiting the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water that must provide the same protection for public health.

Substances that may be present in source water include:

**Microbial Contaminants**, such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, or wildlife;

**Inorganic Contaminants**, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or may result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming;

**Pesticides and Herbicides**, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses;

**Organic Chemical Contaminants**, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production and may also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, and septic systems;

**Radioactive Contaminants**, which can be naturally occurring or may be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities;

**Radon:** Radon is a radioactive gas that you can't see, taste, or smell. It is found throughout the U.S. Radon can move up through the ground and into a home through cracks and holes in the foundation. Radon can build up to high levels in all types of homes. Radon can also get into indoor air when released from tap water from showering, washing dishes, and other household activities. Compared to radon entering the home through soil, radon entering the home through tap water will in most cases be a small source of radon in indoor air. Radon is a known human carcinogen. Breathing air containing radon can lead to lung cancer. Drinking water containing radon may also cause increased risk of stomach cancer. If you are concerned about radon in your home, test the air in your home. Testing is inexpensive and easy. Fix your home if the level of radon in your air is 4 Picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L) or higher. There are simple ways to fix a radon problem that aren't too costly. For additional information, call your state radon program or call EPA's Radon Hotline (800-SOS-RADON);

**Nitrates:** Nitrates in drinking water at levels above 10 ppm is a health risk for infants of less than six months of age. High nitrate levels in drinking water can cause blue baby syndrome. Nitrate levels may rise quickly for short periods of time because of rainfall or agricultural activity. If you are caring for an infant you should ask advice from your health care provider;

**Lead:** Infants and children who drink water containing lead in excess of the action level could experience delays in their physical or mental development. Children could show slight deficits in attention span and learning abilities. Adults who drink this water over many years could develop kidney problems or high blood pressure.

For more information about contaminants and potential health effects, call the U.S. EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

### MICROBIAL TESTING

To ensure drinking water safety, routine bacteriological tests are conducted. Over 60 samples from the distribution system and wells are collected each month from representative locations. Samples are tested for coliform bacteria, indicators of potential contamination. In 2023, the Water Utility collected 720 samples. None tested positive for coliform bacteria. The absence of coliform positive samples reflects good source water quality and adequate disinfection maintained in the distribution system.

- ◆ In 2023, the Water Utility pumped **3,507,370,000 gallons of water.**
- ◆ Avg. Cost per gallon of water for Residential properties in 2023 was **\$0.004**

**Current Water Rates can be found on the back of your quarterly bill or are available online at [www.cityoflacrosse.org](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org).**

## HYDRANT FLUSHING

The Water Utility flushes the entire water system annually to purge naturally occurring minerals and sediments that accumulate over time. These materials do not pose a health hazard but can discolor the water when the system is disrupted. Most system flushing is done at night, which allows use of wells that are normally off during the day and makes almost the full system capacity available for flushing. Night flushing has been very successful in significantly reducing daytime problems when water demand is highest.

If you experience discolored water as a result of water system flushing, these materials can usually be flushed out of home plumbing systems by running **cold** water from an outside hose bib, an interior basement faucet, or into a bathtub, or any faucet without an aerator or faucet screen.

## Contaminant Reporting Definitions

**MCL (Maximum Contaminant Level):** The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

**MCLG (Maximum Contaminant Level Goal):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

**MCLs are set at very stringent levels. To understand the possible health effects described for many regulated contaminants, a person would have to consume 2 liters of water every day at the MCL level for a lifetime to have a one-in-a-million chance of having the described health effect.**

**AL (Action Level):** The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers a treatment or other requirement which a water system must follow.

**V & E (Variances & Exemptions):** State or EPA permission not to meet an MCL or a treatment technique under certain conditions.

**90th Percentile:** 90% of samples are equal to or less than the number on the chart.

**n/d (Non-Detects):** Laboratory analysis indicates the constituent is not present.

**n/a (Not-Applicable):** Limits do not apply.

**NR (Not-Regulated):** State or EPA has not established a limit.

**ppm (Parts per million) or mg/l (Milligrams per liter):** One part per million corresponds to one minute in two years or one penny in \$10,000.

**ppb (Parts per billion) or ug/l (Micrograms per liter):** One part per billion corresponds to one minute in 2,000 years or one penny in \$10,000,000.

**ppt (Parts per trillion) or ng/l (Nanograms per liter):** One part per trillion corresponds to one minute in 2,000,000 years or one penny in \$10,000,000,000.

**pCi/L (Picocuries per liter):** Picocuries per liter is a measure of the radioactivity in water.

**TCR (Total Coliform Rule):** Refers to EPA regulations for microbiological standards.

**TT (Treatment Technique):** A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.

**HA and HAL (Health Advisory):** An estimate of acceptable drinking water levels for chemical substance based on health effects information. Health Advisor Level is a concentration of contaminant which, if exceeded, poses a health risk and may require a system to post a public notice. Health Advisories are determined by US EPA.

**HI (Hazard Index):** Used to assess the potential health impacts associated with mixtures of contaminants. HI guidance for a class of contaminants or mixture of contaminants may be determined by the US EPA or WI Dept of Health Services. If a Health Index is exceeded a system may be required to post a public notice.

**RPHGS (Recommended Public Health Groundwater Standards):** Proposed standards by the WI Dept of Health Services. The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, poses a health risk and may require a system to post a public notice.

### Contaminants with a Public Health Groundwater Standard, Health Advisory Level, or a Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level

The following table lists contaminants which were detected in your water and that have either a Public Health Groundwater Standard (PHGS), Health Advisory Level (HAL), or a Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level (SMCL), or both. There are no violations for detections of contaminants that exceed Health Advisory Levels, Public Health Groundwater Standards or Secondary Maximum Contaminant Levels. Secondary Maximum Contaminant Levels are levels that do not present health concerns but may pose aesthetic problems such as objectionable taste, odor, or color. Public Health Groundwater Standards and Health Advisory Levels are levels at which concentrations of the contaminant present a health risk.

The information shown below shows ranges of results of water samples taken directly from the City's active wells in accordance with sampling requirements and schedule provided by the DNR.

Contaminant (units)	Sample Year	SMCL (ppm)	PHGS or HAL (ppm)	Range of Results	Level Found	Typical Source of Contaminant
Aluminum (ppm)	2023	0.05	0.2	0.18-0.19	0.19	Runoff/leaching from natural deposits
Chloride (ppm)	2023	250	n/a	37.90-152.00	152.00	Runoff/leaching from natural deposits, road salt, water softeners
Iron (ppm)	2023	0.30	n/a	0 to .04 ppm	0.04	Runoff/leaching from natural deposits, industrial wastes
Manganese (ppm)	2023	0.05	0.30	0.00-0.25	0.25	Leaching from natural deposits
Sulfate (ppm)	2023	250	n/a	14.20-32.80	32.80	Runoff/leaching from natural deposits, industrial wastes

#### Contaminant Health Effects

**MANGANESE AND ALUMINUM** Waters containing manganese in quantities above the SMCL are not hazardous to health but may be objectionable for taste, odor or color.

**NOTE:** La Crosse uses the polyphosphate additive as a treatment method to sequester or "tie-up" iron and manganese in the drinking water. This has been very successful in preventing customer problems related to discolored water.

## WATER CONSERVATION TIP

### Tips on how to save while using Outdoor Water

Avoid watering during mid-day heat. This will reduce losses due to evaporation.  
Use a Rain Barrel. Capturing water from downspouts conserves the Municipal supply while providing the best water for lawns and gardens.  
Retain soil moisture by adding bark around trees and shrubs, leaving grass clippings on lawn.

### FIRE HYDRANT USE

Use of City fire hydrants is allowed **only** with a completed Fire Hydrant Use Application under the conditions of the Water Utility's Hydrant Use Policy. The application and policy are available on the City of La Crosse web page or by contacting the La Crosse Utilities office. If you observe ANY suspicious activity involving a fire hydrant or any part of the water system, please report this immediately to the Water Utility or to the Police Department.

## Lead in Home Plumbing

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. The La Crosse Water Utility is responsible for providing high-quality drinking water, but we cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components within your home. When your water has been sitting

for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to pay to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at [www.epa.gov/safewater/lead](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead).

### LEAD AND COPPER

Lead and Copper found in drinking water is typically caused from corrosion of household plumbing; leaching, and erosion of natural deposits. Lead and Copper are tested every three years.

Contaminant	Ideal Goal (MCLG)	Action Level (AL)	90th Percentile	# of Results	Sample Date	Violation?
Copper (ppm)	1.3	1.3	.8550	3 of 60 results were above the action level.	2023	No
Lead (ppb)	0	15	0	1 of 60 results were above the action level.	2023	No

## Cross Connection Control: Did you know...

Your water can become contaminated if connections to your plumbing system are not properly protected. To avoid contamination, backflow preventers are required by state plumbing codes wherever there is an actual or potential hazard for a cross connection. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources requires all public water suppliers to maintain an on-going Cross Connection Control Program involving public education, onsite inspections, and possible corrective actions by building owners. For more information, please visit [www.cityoflacrosse.org/cc](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org/cc). This link will take you to the pertinent information on this program.

*The Property Owners responsibilities related to the meter, meter setting and surrounding piping:*

- *Keep the meter clear and accessible*
- *Ensure the meter and meter setting is protected from damage due to bumping or freezing.*
- *Ensure that the two water shut-off valves by the meter are in good working condition for use in an emergency. It is recommended that you exercise your valves every few months to make sure that they work properly.*
- *Ensure that the two water shut-off valves and surrounding piping are in good condition prior to any meter replacement.*

*Should the meter be damaged the property owner is responsible for the repair or replacement. If the valves do not hold or the valves/piping break during a meter exchange performed by the utility, the owner is responsible for hiring a licensed plumber to make the necessary repairs.*

### PSC SERVICE LINE AND METERING REQUIREMENTS

Pursuant to the WI Public Service Commission (PSC) under PSC 185.52(2)(b) and the La Crosse Water Utility Operating Rules issued by the PSC, there can be only one connection (meter) downstream from a utility's shut-off valve (typically a Curb Stop). Furthermore, no division of water service can be made for the extension of the supply to an adjoining lot or parcel of land.

If a property is found to be non-compliant with the policy, such as having one water service feeding two parcels of land or one service line feeding two meters in separate locations on a single parcel, the property owner will be provided the options and timeline to bring the properties into compliance.

When remodeling or building, please confirm the plans meet each of these necessary requirements in addition to the plumbing and building codes. Full details of the Service Line and Metering Requirements and the available options for correction of non-compliant private service lines are available online at [www.cityoflacrosse.org](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org).

### IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THE WATER QUALITY DATA TABLE:

Our water is tested for many contaminants. The Water Quality Table, see insert provided, lists only those contaminants which were detected in our water. Some contaminants are tested for annually, while others are done more or less frequently. The report includes the minimum and maximum levels found for each substance found in at least one well or sampling site within the past 5 years. Contaminants could be found at only one well and not any others. Contamination levels found in the table may not be representative of the water quality at your home.

See Insert labeled  
*Water Quality*  
*Data Table Insert*

## Water Quality Data Table Insert for La Crosse Water Utility 2023 Annual Water Quality Report

The Water Quality Data Table that follows lists all drinking water contaminants detected and the most recent sample date. The EPA or the DNR allows the Water Utility to monitor for certain contaminants less than once per year because concentrations of these contaminants do not change frequently. Testing frequencies are outlined below, but could be more frequently if a detect is above a certain level.

Contaminants (units)	Ideal Goal (MCLG)	Highest Level Allowed (MCL)	Level Found	Range of Results (low –high)	Violation (Yes/No)	Sample Year	Typical Source of Substance
<b>Inorganic Contaminants</b> ("Level Found" represents the highest single sample result from all monitoring wells or sites with levels detected) - tested once every 3 years, except for Nitrates which are tested annually							
Antimony (ppb)	6	6	1.0	0.0 - 1.0	No	2023	Refineries discharge; solder; fire retardants; ceramic; electronics.
Arsenic (ppb)	n/a	10	1.0	n/d - 1.0	No	2023	Erosion of natural deposits; Runoff from orchards; glass and electronics production wastes.
Barium (ppm)	2	2	.680	.058-.680	No	2023	Discharge from metal refineries; Erosion of natural deposits.
Beryllium (ppb)	4	4	0.16	n/d - 0.16	No	2023	Discharge from metal refineries and coal-burning factories; Discharge from electrical , aerospace, and defense industries
Fluoride (ppm)	4	4	0.7	0.10 - 0.7	No	2023	Erosion of natural deposits; Water additive which promotes strong teeth.
Nickel (ppb)	100		5.6600	n/d - 5.6600	No	2023	Nickel occurs naturally in soils, groundwater and surface waters and is often used in electroplating, stainless steel and alloy products.
Nitrate [measured as Nitrogen] (ppm)	10	10	4.75	.00 - 4.75	No	2023	Fertilizer use; leaching from septic tanks, sewage; erosion of natural deposits Highest Average from any individual sample site.
Selenium (ppb)	50	50	2.0	1 - 2.0	No	2023	Erosion of natural deposits; Petroleum and metal refineries
Sodium (ppm)	NR	NR	88.10	11.30 - 88.1	No	2023	Erosion of natural deposits; leaching; road salt application .
Thallium (ppb)	.50	2.0	2.0	n/d - 2.0	No	2023	Ore processing sites; Electronics, glass and drug factories
<b>Volatile Organic Contaminants</b> ("Level Found" represents the highest result from an individual sample site) —Tested quarterly if have detects, but tested once every 3 years if have no detects for 3 straight years.							
Tetrachloroethylene (ppb)	0	5	1.2	n/d—1.6	No	2023	Leaching from PVC pipes, discharge from factories and dry cleaners
Trichloroethylene (ppb)	0	5	0.50	n/d—0.50	No	2023	Discharge from metal degreasing sites and other factories.
<b>Disinfection By-Products</b> ("Level Found" represents the average of the highest single sample result from the 2 sites specified—Tested only one time per year so there is no "range") - tested annually							
Haloacetic Acids [HAA5] (ppb)	60	60	4	4 & 4	No	2023	By-product of drinking water chlorination. Results from 2 distribution sites LSE91 & LSE117, given as average and result of both.
Total Trihalomethanes [TTHM] (ppb)	0	80	14.85	13.4 & 16.3	No	2023	By-product of drinking water chlorination. Results from 2 distribution sites LSE91 & LSE117, given as average and result of both.
Trichlorofluoromethane (ppb)	NR	NR	0.15	0—0.15	No	2023	By-product of drinking water chlorination.
<b>Radioactivity</b> ("Level Found" represents the highest single sample result from all monitoring wells or sites with levels detected) —tested only once every five to seven years so there is no "range")							
Gross Alpha Excl U & R (PCI/L)	0	15	5.92	-0.5 - 5.92	No	2020	Erosion of natural deposits
Gross Alpha Incl U & R (n/a)	NR	NR	6.3	-0.2 - 6.3	No	2020	Erosion of natural deposits
Radium, 226 + 228 (PCI/L)	0	5	2.23	n/d - 2.23	No	2020	Erosion of natural deposits
Combined Uranium (ug/L)	0	30	0.8	0.4-0.8	No	2020	Erosion of natural deposits

**Synthetic organic chemicals** – Source water samples taken in 2023 showed no detectable synthetic organic chemicals. These samples are currently required to be taken once every six years.

**Volatile Organic Chemicals** – Water system samples taken in 2023 produced No Detects for these chemicals: Benzene, Bromobenzene, Bromomethane, Carbon Tetrachloride, Chloroethane, Chloromethane, o-Chlorotoluene, p-Chlorotoluene, Dibromochloromethane, Dibromomethane, 1,2-Dichlorobenzene (O-), 1,3-Dichlorobenzene (M-), 1,4-Dichlorobenzene (P-), 1,1-Dichloroethane, 1,2-Dichloroethane, 1,1-Dichloroethylene, 1,2-Dichloroethylene, cis-1,1-Dichloroethylene, Dichloromethane, 1,2-Dichloropropane, 1,3-Dichloropropane, 2,2-Dichloropropane, 1,1-Dichloropropene, 1,3-Dichloropropene, Ethyl Benzene, Chlorobenzene, Styrene, 1,1,1,2-Tetrachloroethane, 1,1,2,2- Toluene, 1,2,4-Trichlorobenzene, 1,1,1-Trichloroethane, 1,1,2-Trichloroethane, 1,2,3-Trichloropropane, Vinyl Chloride, Xylene Total. (tested quarterly if there are detects, but tested once every three years if have no detects for three straight years)

## UCMR5 Additional Sampling Program Data Table -La Crosse Water Utility 2023 Annual Water Quality Report

The La Crosse Water Utility was selected to participate in the 5th cycle of sampling required by USEPA's Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR5). This sampling program is in addition to annual sampling required by the Wisconsin DNR. The purpose of this additional sampling is to monitor currently unregulated contaminants in drinking water and to provide data to the USEPA to support decisions concerning whether future regulations of these contaminants is required to protect public health. UCMR5 samples were taken at all City wells and from the water distribution system, starting in 2023 and finishing in 2023.

Contaminants (units)	Ideal Goal (MCLG)	Highest Level Allowed (MCL) (ppt)	Level Found	Range of Results (ppt) (low -high)	Violation (Yes/No)	Sample Date	Sample Locations
PFBA	n/d	10,000	21 (ppt)	n/d - 21	No	2023	13, 17, 19, 22
PFBS	n/d	450,000	15 (ppt)	n/d - 15	No	2023	13, 17, 19, 22
PFHxA	n/d	150,000	3.7 (ppt)	n/d - 3.7	No	2023	19
PFHxS	n/d	40	8.4 (ppt)	n/d - 8.4	No	2023	16, 17, 19, 22
PFOA	n/d	20	5.1 (ppt)	n/d - 5.1	No	2023	19, 22
PFOS	n/d	20	5.5 (ppt)	n/d - 5.5	No	2023	19
PFPeA	n/d	n/a	4 (ppt)	n/d - 4	No	2023	16, 19

**UCMR 5 No Detections**

NMeFOSSA, NEtFOSSA, PFTrDA, PFTA, PFHpS, PFPeS, NFDHA, PFEESA, PFMBa, PFMPa, 8:2 FTS, 4:2 FTS, 6:2 FTS, HFPO-DA, ADONA, 9CI-PF3ONS, 11CI-PF3OUds, PFUnA, PFDoA, PFDA, PFNA, PFHpA, lithium.



# PFA'S

The La Crosse Water Utility continues its mission to provide safe, high quality drinking water that meets all federal and state standards to protect public health.

## BACKGROUND

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates drinking water by establishing criteria to follow, ensuring that water is safe. In Wisconsin, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) enforces the drinking water standards. The La Crosse Water Utility meets or exceeds all regulatory standards in the United States and Wisconsin. Testing data is made public and shared with consumers to ensure trust and transparency.

In recent years, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, have emerged as substances linked by the EPA to negative health effects. PFAS are a large family of more than 5,000 man-made chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s because of their useful properties. There are thousands of different PFAS, some of which have been more widely used and studied than others. The most common types of PFAS are PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctanoic sulfonic acid). PFAS are found in hundreds of consumer products such as fast-food wrappers, the lining of disposable coffee cups, waterproofing products, and many types of stain resistant coatings used in textile manufacturing. While PFOA and PFOS have been phased out from their use in commercial products, they are still found in the environment from historical uses, as they do not break down naturally, and may ultimately make their way into surface and ground water. A major concern with PFAS chemicals is that they break down very slowly and as a result they can build up in people, animals, and the environment over time. Because of their widespread use and their persistence in the environment, many PFAS are found in the blood of people and animals all over the world and are present at low levels in a variety of food products and in the environment. PFAS are found in water, air, fish, and soil at locations across the nation and the globe.

There are four specific PFAS compounds specifically addressed in recent notices from the EPA: **PFOS, PFOA, GenX and PFBS:**

**PFOS** – key ingredient in stain repellent, Scotchgard; used in surface coatings for carpet, furniture, and waterproof clothing.

**PFOA** – makes nonstick coatings for cookware; best known of these coatings, PTFE or Teflon™, is made from PFOA and may contain some traces of PFOA. It was also used in production of carpets, upholstery, clothing, floor wax, and sealants.

**GenX** – was developed as a replacement for PFOA once PFOA began being associated with negative health effects; however, GenX has now been linked to the same and health effects as PFOA, according to the EPA.

**PFBS** – wetter in industrial processes and in water-resistant or stain-resistant coatings on textiles, carpets, and paper; 3M Company is reportedly its leading producer.

On November 6, 2020, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) [recommended groundwater standards](#) to the DNR for a number of different substances, including PFAS compounds. The DHS health advisory levels for these same PFA's compounds are as follows:

<b>Contaminant (units)</b>	<b>RPHGS or HAL (PPT)</b>
PFBS (ppt)	450,000
PFHXS (ppt)	40
PFHXA (ppt)	150,000
PFOS (ppt)	20
PFOA (ppt)	20
PFOA AND PFOS TOTAL (ppt)	20

On June 15, 2022, the United States EPA made a health advisory (HAL) announcement with new number for PFAS. HALs are non-enforceable; rather, they provide technical information that guides officials to develop monitoring plans, determine treatment solutions, and create policies.

The EPA has not yet stopped polluters from discharging PFAS, but on March 14, 2023, they proposed national drinking water standards for PFOA and PFOS, and a combination of four other PFAS chemicals (PFNA, HFPO-DA (GenX), PFHxS, and PFBS).

On August 1, 2022, DNR administrative rules setting regulatory standards for two PFA’s compounds, PFOA and PFOS, in drinking water became effective. This new rule requires utilities to test for PFOA and PFOS based on the testing schedule established by the DNR. The action limit or (Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)) for both compounds in drinking water was set at 70 parts per trillion (ppt). Any water system with PFOA or PFOS above the 70 ppt limit will be required to take action to comply with the new standards.

On April 10, 2024, the United States EPA announced final National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) for six PFAS, establishing legally enforceable levels, called Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs), for six PFAS in drinking water. The La Crosse Water Utility will continue their current testing and monitoring schedule under the Wisconsin compliance monitoring requirements and will use data gathered to determine future steps necessary to comply with EPA’s lower MCLs.

The State of Wisconsin will have up to two years to incorporate the federal rule into the DNR’s rules. Until that time, the DNR’s existing PFAS drinking water rule (and the existing state PFOA/PFOS standard of 70 ppt separately or combined) will apply.

Under the new EPA rule, the MCLs for PFOA and PFOS were set at 4 ppt and a Hazard Index of 1 was included for mixtures containing PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA (Gen-X), PFBS. The final rule also included individual MCLs for PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA (Gen-X) of 10 ppt.

EPA’s rule requires that by 2027, systems must conduct initial monitoring, followed by ongoing compliance monitoring. Water systems must also provide the public with information on the levels of these PFAs in their drinking water beginning in 2027. Wisconsin systems, including the La Crosse Water Utility, have already started monitoring for PFOA & PFOS pursuant to state requirements. Wisconsin’s compliance monitoring requirements will continue to apply but will be modified when the federal rule is incorporated into the DNR’s rule.

Starting in 2029, systems must comply with all regulated PFAs MCLs and provide public notifications for violations of the PFAS MCLs. While compliance with existing standards under the DNR rule (PFOA/PFOS at 70 ppt combined) will be required before 2029, compliance with the lower federal standards will not be required until 2029 based on current rules.

For the time being, DNR’s PFAS rules will continue to govern Wisconsin water utilities.

## PFAS Contaminants with a Recommended Public Health Groundwater standard or Recommended Health Advisory Level

The following table lists PFAS contaminants which were detected in your water and that have a Recommended Public Health Groundwater Standard (RPHGS) or Health Advisory Level (HAL). There are no violations for detections of contaminants that exceed the RPHGS or HAL. The RPHGS are levels at which concentrations of the contaminant present a health risk and are based on guidance provided by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

No active or seasonal La Crosse well exceeds any of the adopted drinking water standards for PFAS. Should any active well ever test at or above a health advisory limit for any compound required by routine testing, including PFAS, the Utility would notify the public and comply with all regulatory requirements.

Typical Source of Contaminant	Drinking water is one way that people can be exposed to PFAS. In Wisconsin, two-thirds of people use groundwater as their drinking water source. PFAS can get in groundwater from places that make or use PFAS and release from consumer products in landfills.			
Contaminant (units)	RPHGS or HAL (PPT)	Level Found	Range	Sample Year
PFBS (ppt)	450000	16.00	0.48 - 16.00	2023
PFHXS (ppt)	40	11.00	0.53 - 11.00	2023
PFHXA (ppt)	150000	2.80	0.82 - 2.80	2023
PFOS (ppt)	20	4.20	0.39 - 4.20	2023
PFOA (ppt)	20	4.30	0.00 - 5.20	2023
PFOA AND PFOS TOTAL (ppt)	20	8.50	0.39 - 8.50	2023

### Is La Crosse water safe?

Yes, La Crosse tap water meets all federal and state standards for drinking water safety. If you have special circumstances or want to further purify your water, home filtration (activated carbon filters and reverse osmosis) may be an option to reduce PFAS levels.

### Which well serves your home or business?

No single well feeds any specific home or business. All water supplied from wells is mixed and fills the two reservoirs, from which the citywide pressurized distribution system is fed.

### Home filtration options

Only about one percent of the water delivered to La Crosse homes is used for drinking and cooking. The rest is used for flushing toilets, doing laundry, washing dishes, outdoor watering and other needs. While the PFAS found in La Crosse water is at very low levels, it may be possible to reduce PFAS chemicals in water using a home filter.

Guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Health regarding home filters for PFAS can be found here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-03012.htm> (English, Spanish, Hmong)

### For More Information

For more information on PFAS and what you can do, visit the websites of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, or the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Additional helpful links and prior notices can be found at [www.cityoflacrosse.org/PFAS](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org/PFAS).