

# Well Water Testing South of La Crosse Regional Airport

October 12, 2020



Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) have been detected in two City of La Crosse municipal wells and groundwater samples near the La Crosse Regional Airport. The levels of PFAS detected are a result of the utilization of PFAS-containing firefighting foam (also known as Aqueous Film Forming Foam or AFFF). The impacts to the municipal wells are below the DNR's proposed standards, but the La Crosse Water Utility has removed the wells from production as a precaution.

The City of La Crosse and its environmental consultant, The OS Group, are investigating the airport for PFAS contamination from past releases, as required by the DNR. In an abundance of caution, the City of La Crosse is offering private well water sampling to all residents located downstream from the airport in the Town of Campbell.

## What are Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)?

Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are a large group of human-made chemicals that have been used in industry, firefighting foams, and consumer products since the 1950s. There is evidence that exposure to higher levels of certain PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects.

## How do PFAS enter and affect groundwater?

PFAS can enter groundwater after the use of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) on the ground surface. PFAS can travel downstream in groundwater from the location at which the substance contacted the ground surface.

## At what level are PFAS dangerous and what are the effects?

In 2019, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services proposed a standard for two PFAS, PFOA and PFOS, levels in groundwater to be at or below 20 parts per trillion. Less recent studies have shown that some types of PFAS can pose health effects at 70 parts per trillion. If humans ingest PFAS, the PFAS can accumulate in the body and stay in the body for long periods of time. As people get exposed to PFAS from different sources over time, the level of certain PFAS chemicals in their bodies may increase to the point where they suffer from adverse health effects, including heightened risk of developing cancer.

## Use of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) containing PFAS

Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) is currently used at airports for fire response, and used historically prior to September 1, 2020 when training with AFFF was prohibited in Wisconsin. As of September 1, testing of AFFF requires the facility to use appropriate treatment, containment, storage and disposal measures to prevent the discharge of foam to the environment.

## The Testing Process

The DNR has recommended that the City of La Crosse conduct tests on 70 to 75 potable water wells downstream from the location of PFAS sources at the airport. The City of La Crosse is proposing a testing area of 120 to 130 wells to ensure the most complete picture possible in the testing process. Participation in sampling is voluntary and will be conducted at no cost to the well owner.



## Public Information Session

The city of La Crosse will be holding a public information session on October 29 at 5pm. More information about how to attend the session will be made available as the date approaches.

## Contact Info

### The OS Group

John Storlie, PG  
608-668-2718 [PFAS@theOSgrp.com](mailto:PFAS@theOSgrp.com)

### City of La Crosse

Tim Kabat, Mayor 608-789-7500  
[kabatt@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:kabatt@cityoflacrosse.org)

## More Information

[www.cityoflacrosse.org](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org)