

Washtenaw Industrial Facility PFAS Frequently Asked Questions (formerly Universal Die Cast) in Saline, Michigan

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The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) are working with the current facility owner to investigate groundwater contamination related to perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) near the former die casting and plating facility at 232 Monroe Street in Saline, Michigan. This site is currently known as the Washtenaw Industrial Facility.

Shallow groundwater at this location contains PFAS and other plating-related contaminants. This water is venting to the Saline River. We do not have information on whether deeper ground water is contaminated with PFAS.

There are about eight private drinking water wells near the Washtenaw Industrial Facility, and those will be promptly sampled to assure public health protection.

Where is the Investigation Area?

The initial investigation area is in the area where Monroe Street crosses the Saline River in Saline Township. This includes the Washtenaw Industrial Facility and about eight residential properties that are closest to the Washtenaw Industrial Facility that have private drinking water wells. The city of Saline municipal drinking water was tested for PFAS in 2018 and no PFAS was detected. The investigation area may change based on the results of the initial investigation and/or updated information on the presence or absence of additional drinking water wells.

An interactive map can be viewed at this location:

<http://mdeq.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=28a6a37d835548e48bfd2bfe6e2ab17e>.

What is being done about this issue?

The MDEQ, the U.S. EPA, and our public health partners, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD), are working with the current facility owner to promptly investigate private drinking water wells, that are close to the Washtenaw Industrial Facility, to ensure public health is protected. The first phase of this work includes:

- Immediately contacting the homeowners using private drinking water wells that are closest to the former plating operation. These initial wells have been identified by the MDEQ, the MDHHS, and the WCHD.

- Conducting additional groundwater sampling for PFAS and other plating-related contaminants using existing and new groundwater monitoring wells at the former plating facility located at 232 Monroe Street, 237 Monroe Street, and 290 Monroe Street in Saline, Michigan. This includes the former east parking area and the closed pond across the river that received plating wastes.
- Conducting long-term monitoring at groundwater monitoring wells and private drinking water wells, as necessary, to ensure concentrations remain below current health-based levels of concern.
- Developing a plan and timeline to stop the discharge of contaminated shallow groundwater to the Saline River at levels that are greater than the Michigan Water Quality Standards. This could also include additional testing of the river water and testing of the fish, as appropriate.

Further phases of study and cleanup will be determined based on the results of these ongoing investigations.

What areas have PFAS contamination in the groundwater?

In the fall of 2018, the current facility owner of the Washtenaw Industrial Facility and the MDEQ sampled three shallow groundwater monitoring wells at the facility. These wells were selected because they were known to be contaminated with chromium. The samples showed the presence of PFAS, including perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and erfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA), in shallow groundwater.

- PFAS was detected in the shallow groundwater at levels of concern for drinking water and surface water at the facility. The extent of the PFAS contamination has not yet been determined and is the focus of the current investigation.
- The amount of PFOS, plus PFOA, found in the three groundwater monitoring wells on site ranged from 45 to 2,660 parts per trillion (ppt). The MDEQ collected split samples at these locations and the concentrations were similar.

Are there PFAS in the municipal water?

- As part of the MDEQ's statewide sampling effort of public water supplies, the city of Saline's water supply was tested on August 2, 2018, and PFAS was not detected.
- Most of the residents in the investigation area are on municipal water and **are not** affected by this potential contamination. **If residents are on municipal water and do not have a private drinking water well, they do not need to do anything differently and do not need to test their water for PFAS.** If you receive a water bill, then you probably do not have a well.

- This investigation focuses on residences with private drinking water wells that are close to the Washtenaw Industrial Facility site.

How could this affect me as a resident? Are there PFAS in my drinking water?

- In February of 2019, the MDEQ and the WCHD identified several private drinking water wells located near the former plating facility. The MDEQ, in coordination with the MDHHS and the WCHD, will be contacting these residents to have their wells tested for PFAS. If PFAS is present in a drinking water well(s) at a level of concern, the agencies will ensure that the affected residents are notified immediately and have access to an alternate water supply while a permanent solution is developed.
- It is important to note that, as described further below, PFAS is used in many consumer and household goods.

Are there PFAS in the Saline River?

- The Saline River was sampled for PFAS by the MDEQ, Water Resources Division, in 2018. Results ranged from 1.8 to 130 ppt PFOS. Fish sampling is scheduled for later this spring to determine if any additional actions need to be taken with respect to eating fish from the Saline River.
- These results do not suggest a safety issue for pets or for recreational use of the river, although ingestion of the water should be avoided.

What are PFAS?

- PFAS are a large group of man-made chemicals that are fire resistant and repel oil, stains, grease, and water.
- PFAS break down very slowly in the environment and are highly soluble, and easily move through soil to groundwater.
- PFAS are used in firefighting foams, stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing and shoes, fast food wrappers, personal care products, and many other consumer goods. PFAS are also used by many industries such as plating, tanneries, and clothing manufacturers, where waterproofing may be required, or a protective film is needed in a manufacturing process.
- PFOS and PFOA are the only two PFAS compounds that have specific environmental and human health standards in Michigan. Other PFAS compounds are being evaluated to determine if additional standards need to be developed.
- PFAS contamination has been identified in several locations across the state of Michigan because of use in multiple industries.

Why is PFAS contamination a problem?

- PFAS have been classified by the U.S. EPA as an emerging contaminant on the national level. The U.S. EPA has set a Lifetime Health Advisory (LHA) level for two PFAS in drinking water: PFOA and PFOS. The LHA level is 70 ppt for PFOA and PFOS combined.
- PFAS move with groundwater and can end up in domestic wells if they are located downgradient of a PFAS release. If residents have levels of PFAS over 70 ppt in their drinking water, they should drink bottled water or use a certified PFAS filter until they can get water from an alternate source.

Can PFAS harm my health?

More research on PFAS and health impacts is being done. The National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is working with other agencies to better understand how PFAS might affect people's health. Although more research is needed, some studies in people have shown that certain PFAS may:

- Affect growth, learning, and behavior of infants and older children
- Lower a woman's chance of getting pregnant
- Interfere with the body's natural hormones
- Increase cholesterol levels
- Affect the immune system
- Increase the risk of cancer

At this time, scientists are still learning about the health effects of exposures to mixtures of PFAS.

Studies in animals help us understand what could happen in people. Animals given high amounts of PFOA and PFOS showed:

- Harm to the liver
- Harm to the body's ability to fight off sickness
- Birth defects, slow growth, and newborn deaths

If you have medical questions, talk with your doctor. You may find the ATSDR factsheet, *Talking to Your Doctor about Exposure to PFAS*, helpful. It is available at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas.

What can I do if I am concerned about PFAS in drinking water?

- Residents in the area that have a private drinking water well may choose to take actions to reduce potential exposures to PFAS that may be in their drinking water wells while the investigation is on-going. Those actions include:
 - Using bottled water for drinking and cooking.
 - Using a PFAS water filtration system. Residents who are interested in installing their own certified filtration system may find the factsheet, *In-Home Water Filtration Systems for PFAS Reduction*, to be a helpful resource. It is available at: https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/0,9038,7-365-86510_87156-469641--,00.html.
- Residents not included in the investigation area and who are interested in testing their own well may choose to contact an environmental consultant or testing company. Residents who choose to test their well independently are encouraged to share those results with the MDEQ, the MDHHS, or the WCHD.

How can I stay informed?

- More information can also be found at <https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse>.
- For questions about PFAS and health, please contact the MDHHS, Division of Environmental Health, hotline at 800-648-6942; or the WCHD at 734-222-3800 or l-wchdcontact@washtenaw.org.
- For question about PFAS in Washtenaw County, contact the WCHD at 734-222-3800, email l-wchdcontact@washtenaw.org or visit www.washtenaw.org/pfas.
- For questions about the investigation, please contact the MDEQ Environmental Assistance Center at 800-662-9278.