



TOWN OF BURLINGTON

Department of Public Works

Dear Customers:

Beginning in April 2021 we will be monitoring a family of chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that have been detected in some public water supplies in Massachusetts and across the nation. Recently, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) issued a new drinking water standard for the sum of six PFAS compounds (PFAS6). This new standard requires all Massachusetts public water suppliers to test for PFAS. The sum of PFAS6 may not exceed 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L), also equal to 20 parts per trillion (ppt).

The Town of Burlington has a mission to deliver clean and reliable water, and we are always concerned about threats to our water supply. We already test regularly for many regulated contaminants, and if above the standard, take necessary measures to address the drinking water.

We will be testing for the presence of the PFAS6 and will make those results available to the public after they are returned by the laboratory and confirmed by follow-up testing. This process can take several weeks.

With relatively recent advances in laboratory testing, the presence of PFAS can be found in parts per trillion where in the past it would be undetected in parts per million or billion. If testing shows PFAS6 levels exceed state standards, please be assured that we will take immediate action to work toward compliance with the regulations and communicate those plans with the public.

PFAS are a family of chemicals used for nonstick, stain-resistant and water-proof coatings, and in numerous consumer products, industrial uses, and firefighting foams. Manufacturing of certain PFAS was discontinued in the U.S. decades ago, but they may still be used in imported products. PFAS are resilient and do not degrade easily. As a result, they are widely found in the environment as products are disposed of and PFAS leaches into the soil and water, finding its way to food and drinking water sources.

PFAS is ubiquitous, and in the United States and other industrialized countries, most people have concentrations of these compounds in their blood. The good news is the levels have been dropping as use of certain PFAS have been discontinued. A 2015-2016 federal study found an 82% drop in PFOS and 70% drop in PFOA in the general population, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

MassDEP recommends that consumers in a sensitive subgroup (pregnant or nursing women, infants and people diagnosed by their health care provider to have a compromised immune system), are





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advised not to consume, drink, or cook with water when the level of PFAS6 is above 20 ppt. These individuals are advised to use alternative sources of water such as bottled water tested for PFAS6 or in-home filtration systems certified to remove PFAS6 by independent testing groups.

Scientists are still learning about the health effects of exposures to mixtures of PFAS. MassDEP states consuming water with PFAS6 above the drinking water standard does not mean that adverse effects will occur, and that the degree of risk depends on the level of chemicals and the duration of exposure. There are scientific studies that suggest potential links between exposure to certain PFAS in the environment and health effects. The studies have looked at the effects on the development of fetuses and infants, the thyroid, the liver, kidneys, hormone levels and the immune system, as well as if a cancer risk exists for people exposed to levels well above the drinking water standard.

As we await further scientific study, MassDEP has acted to set a drinking water standard. As your public water supplier, we strive to always comply with drinking water standards and will conduct the necessary testing to ensure compliance. We understand that you may have questions and concerns. Please, call or email Russell Makiej (781) 270-1648 or rmakiej@burlington.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Russell Makiej
Water Treatment Manager

If you wish to learn more about PFAS, visit www.safewatermass.org, a website developed by the Massachusetts Water Works Association to provide information to our consumers and links to reliable sources of additional information.

