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Biden-Harris Administration Proposes First-Ever National Standard to Protect Communities from PFAS in Drinking Water

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Contact Information

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WASHINGTON – Today, the Biden-Harris Administration announced it is proposing the first-ever national drinking water standard for six per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the latest action under President Biden’s plan to combat PFAS pollution [🔗](#)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/03/14/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-takes-new-action-to-protect-communities-from-pfas-pollution/> and Administrator

Regan’s PFAS Strategic Roadmap <https://epa.gov/pfas/pfas-strategic-roadmap-epas-commitments-action-2021-2024>. Through this action, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is

taking a major step to protect public health from PFAS pollution, leveraging the latest science and complementing state efforts to limit PFAS by proposing to establish legally enforceable levels for six PFAS known to occur in drinking water.

This proposal builds on other key milestones to combat PFAS, including EPA's proposal to designate two PFAS as CERCLA hazardous substances; enhancing data on PFAS under EPA's National PFAS Testing Strategy and through nationwide sampling for 29 PFAS in public drinking water systems; using EPA's Clean Water Act permitting and regulatory programs to reduce PFAS pollution in the environment from industry; and initiating the distribution of \$10 billion in funding to address emerging contaminants under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

“Communities across this country have suffered far too long from the ever-present threat of PFAS pollution. That’s why President Biden launched a whole-of-government approach to aggressively confront these harmful chemicals, and EPA is leading the way forward,” **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. “EPA’s proposal to establish a national standard for PFAS in drinking water is informed by the best available science, and would help provide states with the guidance they need to make decisions that best protect their communities. This action has the potential to prevent tens of thousands of PFAS-related illnesses and marks a major step toward safeguarding all our communities from these dangerous contaminants.”

The proposal, if finalized, would regulate PFOA and PFOS as individual contaminants, and will regulate four other PFAS – PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and GenX Chemicals – as a mixture.

- PFOA and PFOS: EPA is proposing to regulate PFOA and PFOS at a level they can be reliably measured at 4 parts per trillion.
- PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and GenX Chemicals: EPA is also proposing a regulation to limit any mixture containing one or more of PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and/or GenX Chemicals. For these PFAS, water systems would use an established approach called a hazard index calculation, defined in the proposed rule, to determine if the **combined** levels of these PFAS pose a potential risk.

If finalized, the proposed regulation will require public water systems to monitor for these chemicals. It will also require systems to notify the public and reduce PFAS contamination if levels exceed the proposed regulatory standards. EPA anticipates that

if fully implemented, the rule will, over time, prevent thousands of deaths and reduce tens of thousands of serious PFAS-attributable illnesses. This action establishes nationwide protection from PFAS pollution for all people, including environmental justice communities.


“I applaud Administrator Regan and President Biden for taking this bold step forward that will help ensure our water is safe for New Hampshire families and that parents have the peace of mind they deserve when they turn on the tap,” **said New Hampshire Senator Jeanne Shaheen**. “This has long been a top concern for me and is why as a lead negotiator of the water provisions in the bipartisan infrastructure bill, I fought to include a historic level of funding – \$10 billion – to combat PFAS exposure. These dollars will be crucial in providing our municipalities with the resources they will need to comply with these new regulations so that together we can prioritize clean water for our communities. As this process moves forward and with the anticipation of the rule being finalized, I urge the Biden administration to move swiftly and ensure timely allocation of funds from the infrastructure bill to assist public water operators as they begin work to meet these new enforceable drinking water levels.”

“I have long supported the implementation of a national drinking water standard to ensure that the water in our communities is clean and safe for consumption,” **said Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Congressional PFAS Taskforce**. “Today’s announcement is a step in the right direction as we work to prevent the future contamination of PFAS ‘forever chemicals’ in our water and I look forward to continuing to work with the Administration to enforce a high standard of water quality.”

“After decades of delay, President Biden’s EPA has delivered a drinking water standard for PFOA and PFOS which, when finalized, will be the toughest in the nation,” **said activist and actor Mark Ruffalo**. “By proposing to regulate four other PFAS as a mixture, the Biden EPA is also putting our communities ahead of the polluters. President Biden and his team pledged to make PFAS a priority and he has delivered. No Administration has done more to address the urgent threat posed by these toxic forever chemicals than the Biden Administration. My message to polluters is simple: after poisoning your workers and neighbors for decades, it is time to make our public health, not your profits, our top priority. My message to communities devastated by PFAS pollution is equally simple: help is finally on the way.”

"No one should ever wonder if the PFAS in their tap water will one day make them sick," **said Clean Cape Fear co-founder Emily Donovan.** "We all deserve access to health-protective drinking water. It's a basic human right. We applaud the Biden EPA for having the courage to do what multiple administrations could not. Today, prayers were answered."

Today's actions represent a significant milestone for the Biden-Harris Administration's commitments to combat PFAS pollution and safeguard drinking water. President Biden has secured historic funding to address emerging contaminants like PFAS, including \$10 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. In February 2023, EPA announced the availability of \$2 billion from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to address emerging contaminants, including PFAS, in drinking water across the country. These funds will promote access to safe and clean water in small, rural, and disadvantaged communities while supporting local economies.

EPA requests input on the proposal from all stakeholders, including the public, water system managers, and public health professionals. Comments may be submitted through the public docket, identified by Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2022-0114, at www.regulations.gov  [<https://www.regulations.gov/>](https://www.regulations.gov/).

For more information on this proposal, please visit EPA's Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) webpage [<https://epa.gov/sdwa/and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas>](https://epa.gov/sdwa/and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas).

Background

PFAS are a category of manufactured chemicals that can cause serious health problems, including cancer, if people are exposed to them over a long period of time. Since EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan announced the Agency's PFAS Strategic Roadmap [<https://epa.gov/pfas/pfas-strategic-roadmap-epas-commitments-action-2021-2024>](https://epa.gov/pfas/pfas-strategic-roadmap-epas-commitments-action-2021-2024) in October 2021, EPA has continued to implement a whole-of-agency approach by advancing science and following the law to safeguard public health, protect the environment, and hold polluters accountable. The actions described in the PFAS Roadmap each represent important and meaningful steps to safeguard communities from PFAS contamination. Cumulatively, these actions will build upon one another and lead to more enduring and protective solutions. In November 2022, EPA released "A Year of Progress Under EPA's PFAS Strategic Roadmap

<https://epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-11/pfas%20roadmap%20progress%20report_final_nov%202017.pdf>,” which underscores key actions taken by the agency during the first year of implementing the PFAS Roadmap.

EPA will continue to work with federal, state, territorial, and Tribal governments and drinking water systems to address PFAS in drinking water and implement solutions to reduce human health risks. And EPA is committed to taking broader actions to help reduce Americans’ exposure to PFAS, including:

- Monitoring thousands of drinking water systems across the country for dozens of PFAS, beginning this year;
- Taking final action on a proposal to designate two PFAS as “hazardous substances” to help hold polluters accountable;
- Restricting PFAS discharges to our waterways by strengthening Clean Water Act standards;
- Finalizing chemical data and safety rules that will increase our knowledge about PFAS, allow us to act faster and more strategically, and restrict legacy PFAS from reentering production; and
- Considering public comments submitted on today’s proposed rule toward taking final action on nationwide PFAS drinking water standards.

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