



The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) defines a water contaminant as any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substance or matter in water. The law enables the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set legal limits on the levels of certain contaminants in drinking water.

The SDWA sets a process that the EPA must follow to develop the national primary drinking water standards intended to control the level of contaminants in the nation's drinking water. The EPA currently has drinking water regulations for more than 90 contaminants.

Following years of scientific testing and evaluation, in February 2021, EPA implemented the national primary drinking water regulation development process for two PFAS contaminants, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). PFAS stands for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a group of thousands of man-made chemical compounds in use since the 1940s to make products resistant to high temperatures, water, and stains.

PFOA and PFOS are two PFAS compounds believed to have adverse health effects at very low concentrations. Because of these properties, PFOA and PFOS were phased out of production by U.S. manufacturers in the mid-2000s. However, PFOA and PFOS can still be imported into the U.S. through consumer goods. They also remain in some drinking water sources due to decades of industrial pollution and consumer product use. The EPA has stated that approximately 80% of a person's exposure to PFAS comes from consumer goods such as cookware, cosmetics, food wrappings, stain/water-resistant clothing, and carpet and furniture treatments.

On March 14, 2023, the EPA announced its proposed national drinking water standards – also known as Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) – for PFOA and PFOS. The announcement now starts public comment and scientific review processes that will take place over the next several months. After these processes are complete, the EPA's final drinking water standards may differ from the proposed MCLs that they announced in March.

Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLGs) were also announced. It is important to note the difference between an MCL and an MCLG. Once finalized, an MCL is an enforceable drinking water standard. An MCLG is NOT a drinking water standard; it is a public health goal. The EPA defines an MCLG as the maximum level of a contaminant in drinking water at which no known or anticipated adverse effect on the health of persons would occur.

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When EPA issues the final MCLs later this year, it will also announce an effective date set in the future so water providers have time to meet the new standards. *The effective date for the final PFOA and PFOS MCLs is expected to be sometime in 2026.*

The proposed MCLs announced in March – 4.0 parts per trillion for PFOA and 4.0 parts per trillion for PFOS – are both above and below the levels found during a range of tests the Montevallo Water Works and Sewer Board conducted in accordance with current federal and state regulations. We are providing a range of results because PFAS test results can vary over time. The proposed MCLGs – which is a goal and not a drinking water standard – were set at 0 parts per trillion for both PFOA and PFOS.

Our range of results for PFOA is 1.82 - 2.85 parts per trillion for tests conducted between September 8, 2022 and February 2, 2023. Our range of results for PFOS is 5.88 - 12.9 parts per trillion for tests conducted September 8, 2022 to February 2, 2023.

It is important to repeat that the proposed PFOA and PFOS MCLs are not enforceable drinking water standards at this time.

The EPA must follow the entire regulatory development process before the proposed MCLs become the final standards that water utilities must meet. For more information about how the EPA determines their proposed and final PFOA and PFOS MCLs, we invite you to visit their website: [Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\) | US EPA](#)

In the meantime, the Montevallo Water Works and Sewer Board will join with thousands of other water providers across the country to test for PFOA, PFOS, and 27 other PFAS compounds under the EPA's Fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule, also known as UCMR 5.

UMCR 5 testing is intended to give the EPA and water providers a greater understanding of how pervasive PFAS are in our nation's drinking water. As directed under UCMR 5, the Montevallo Water Works and Sewer Board will make our results publicly available and publish our findings in our water quality reports.

The EPA recommends public water systems that find PFOA or PFOS in their drinking water take steps to inform customers, undertake additional sampling to assess the level, scope, and source of contamination, and examine steps to limit exposure. That is what the Montevallo Water Works and Sewer Board has been and will continue to do.

The Montevallo Water Works and Sewer Board is currently in the process of constructing a new water treatment plant. This plant was designed in anticipation of these proposed PFAS MCLs and, if necessary, PFAS removal equipment can be added to the facility.

The Montevallo Water Works and Sewer Board will review our UCMR 5 testing results to determine if additional courses of action are necessary. Meanwhile, we will continue to operate as we always have, as a protector of public health that delivers high-quality drinking water to your taps.

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