

Midwest Environmental Justice Organization: PFAS from MGE fire found in Lake Monona at significant levels

Posted on Thursday, Sep 26, 2019

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

(MADISON, Wis.)—Testing at MGE one week after the July transformer fire found total levels of PFAS over 5,604 ppt in shallow groundwater beneath the site. The groundwater standard recently proposed by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services is 20 ppt for just two types of PFAS— PFOA and PFOS. The levels of these two compounds in groundwater were 51 ppt. One unregulated PFAS compound called 6:2 FTS was found at 4,900 ppt.

PFAS also leached from this contaminated area at MGE into Lake Monona through storm drains. Significant levels of PFAS were found along a storm drain under Blount Street coming from MGE and also where this drain discharges into Lake Monona right under a popular shoreline fishing pier. The PFAS compounds are from “aqueous film-forming foams” (AFFF) used to extinguish the fire by the Madison Fire Department and Truax Air National Guard firefighters

“PFAS compounds at these levels in Lake Monona are serious environmental and human health hazards—and this limited data is not enough to understand the scope of the problem. People fish from the shoreline, piers and boats right where contaminated stormwater from MGE continues to empty into the lake. PFAS can build in fish to levels much higher than in the water itself. Anglers should be warned to not fish in this area until further testing is done,” said Midwest Environmental Justice Organization executive director Maria Powell, PhD.

An environmental engineering firm hired by American Transmission Company (ATC),

owner of the transformer, found the following PFAS levels in addition to those found in the shallow groundwater at MGE: 568 ppt PFAS in a catch basin near the site draining to city storm sewers; 99, 105, and 115 ppt in the stormwater pipe along Blount Street from MGE to the lake; 92 ppt where this pipe discharges into Lake Monona (1/3 mile from the site); 59 ppt at a storm outlet in Law Park (almost ½ mile from the site); 18 ppt at the corner of S. Livingston St. and E. Washington (near MGE) and 15 ppt at the storm sewer outlet to the Yahara River (over a mile from the site).

These results were reported on the [WDNR BRRTS site](#) on September 9 but only discovered there by MEJO on September 24. The public has not been informed about this by ATC, MGE, the City of Madison or the DNR. “Keeping these test results from the public has done a serious disservice to the community,” Powell said. “I call on public officials to warn anglers and residents, and to conduct further testing to determine the extent of the contamination. Sediment, fish and water need to be extensively tested around these stormwater outfalls into Lake Monona. You can’t know the scope of the problem unless you quantify it.”

Extensive details and citations can be found at <https://wp.me/p46pft-1mc>