

Dept. of Natural Resources: Publishes results of firefighting department PFAS survey

Posted on Thursday, Sep 10, 2020

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MADISON, Wis. – As requested by Gov. Tony Evers in the 2019-2021 Biennial Budget, the DNR conducted a survey of the state's fire departments to determine their use of PFAS-containing, or fluorinated, firefighting foams. This survey was designed to help the DNR better understand how much, how often and why fluorinated foam is used across Wisconsin. This information will inform efforts by the state, in partnership with Wisconsin fire departments, to address PFAS contamination that has occurred through the discharge of fluorinated firefighting foam into the environment.

PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are a large group of human-made chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products worldwide since the 1950s. PFAS do not occur naturally and are widespread in the environment. These chemicals bioaccumulate and can stay in the human body for many years. The discharge of PFAS-containing firefighting foam during emergency fire events or training exercises has been identified as a significant source of PFAS contamination.

The DNR's survey of Wisconsin fire departments closed on March 17 with a response rate of 72%. Results indicate that 77% of respondents had purchased, stored, trained with or used fluorinated foam at some point in the past. The majority used fluorinated foam for emergency fires involving flammable liquids or gas. The DNR estimates that the total amount of fluorinated firefighting foam currently in storage across the state is at least 63,200 gallons and may be as high as 96,300 gallons. It was also determined that there may be expired or unwanted foam in excess of 30,000 gallons that requires disposal.

“The DNR Firefighting Foam Survey provides valuable insight regarding the usage of and disposal needs associated with PFAS-containing firefighting foams throughout Wisconsin’s municipal fire departments,” said Chief Chris Garrison, president of the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association (WSFCA). “The survey results also clearly indicate the immediate need for resources and mechanisms for a centralized PFAS-containing firefighting foam collection and disposal program. Collection and environmentally conscious disposal of PFAS-containing firefighting foams is a priority of the WSFCA, and we will continue to collaborate with the DNR and the Wisconsin PFAS Action Council (WisPAC) to ensure we minimize the impacts of PFAS-containing firefighting foams on firefighters, their local communities and the environment.”

The results of this survey will support the state’s efforts going forward to mitigate the use and discharge of fluorinated firefighting foams, including the Wisconsin PFAS Action Plan and work of the Wisconsin PFAS Action Council (WisPAC). The DNR will continue to work with Wisconsin’s fire departments to address PFAS in firefighting foam and protect the health of the firefighting community, the environment and the general public.

For more information, full results and other resources including FAQs and the DNR’s poster for fire departments, visit the DNR’s [webpage](#) on PFAS-containing firefighting foam, under “State Survey.”