

Sen. Cowles: Says push to collect PFAS-containing firefighting foam is finally successful

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after the Joint Committee on Finance voted to release \$1 million in funds that were allocated in the 2021-23 State Budget to create a statewide program to collect and properly dispose of unused and unwanted PFAS-containing firefighting foam, also known as aqueous film forming foam or AFFF:

“As the emergencies that require AFFF – which is used to fight flammable liquid fires – are thankfully few and far between, the supply of this foam has often passed its shelf life and continues to go unused, and sometimes even unwanted. Meanwhile, deteriorating containment measures may lead to accidental and inadvertent discharges into the environment and continued exposure to firefighters.”

“Today’s action is the result of several years’ worth of my work to push this initiative to the forefront after the passage of [2019 Wisconsin Act 101](#) to ban the use of these foams in training and control their use in testing. I’m pleased to be able to say that, between Act 101 and today’s action, we’re able to create the necessary balance between reducing the dangers to human health, including firefighters, and negative environmental footprint these chemicals pose while also ensuring that the costs of the complex collection and disposal of PFAS-containing firefighting foam doesn’t rest solely on the backs of local governments.”

According to a [study](#) conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

that was authorized and funded by the 2019-21 State Budget, 64% of fire departments have AFFF resulting in at least 63,000 gallons and up to 96,000 gallons of AFFF scattered around the state. Over 30,000 gallons of this foam is expired or otherwise unwanted yet is still being stored.

“I want to thank the members of the Joint Finance Committee and particularly Co-Chair Senator Marklein for their interest in this topic, and I’m glad to see that we finally have the funding necessary for a safe method collect, store, and properly dispose of unused and unwanted AFFF from our local fire departments.”