



MassDEP Fact Sheet

Frequently Asked Questions about the MassDEP Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program for Public Water Suppliers (PWS)

1. What are PFAS and why are they a concern?

PFAS are a group of chemicals that have been found in some firefighting foams, spills, landfills, food packaging, outdoor clothing, carpets, leather goods, ski waxes, and more. PFAS have been found to seep into surface soils, groundwater or surface water, and thereby contaminate drinking water. PFAS exposures have been linked to a variety of health risks, particularly in women who are pregnant or nursing, and in infants.

On October 2, 2020, MassDEP published its PFAS public drinking water standard or Massachusetts Maximum Contaminant Level (MMCL) of 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L), or parts per trillion (ppt) applicable to community (COM) and non-transient non-community (NTNC) systems for the sum of the concentrations of six specific PFAS. The six PFAS are: perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS); perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA); perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS); perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA); perfluoroheptanoic acid (PFHpA); and perfluorodecanoic acid (PFDA). MassDEP abbreviates this set of six PFAS as “PFAS6.” This drinking water standard is set to be protective against adverse health effects for all people consuming the water. For information on the PFAS6 drinking water standard see: [310 CMR 22.00: The Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations](#). See MassDEP’s technical support document at: [Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\): An Updated Subgroup Approach to Groundwater and Drinking Water Values](#).

2. Why should a PWS sign up for free PFAS lab analyses?

Under this program, MassDEP will fund sampling and analysis for PFAS in water, as described below. A PWS can use the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program to evaluate its finished and source waters and initiate fiscal and technical assistance from MassDEP, saving money, preparing for upcoming changes and initiating early public health protection measures, if warranted.

3. When will PWS be required to sample for PFAS?

All public water suppliers are required to test for PFAS. TNCs are not required to meet the PFAS6 MCL but are required to collect one sample at each entry point to the distribution system. These monitoring requirements will be included in future MassDEP-issued Water Quality Sampling Schedules. PWS are also required to test all **new** sources of drinking water, including replacement sources and satellite wells for PFAS. See [Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\) Drinking Water Regulations Quick Reference Guide](#) for additional details regarding PFAS6 sampling deadlines.

By taking full advantage of the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program, all PWS will have the opportunity to receive initial free PFAS lab analysis in advance of the required PFAS testing. This is a savings of approximately \$300.00 per sample and includes the associated field blank analyses.

4. Can the samples collected under the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program be used toward regulatory compliance sampling?

Yes. Analyses conducted under the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program which pass QA/QC may be used toward regulatory baseline testing requirements. *Note: As the free funding is available for a limited time, small systems are encouraged to register for sampling under the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program and collect samples **as soon as possible** so that they can reduce their implementation costs.*

5. How does a PWS sign up for free PFAS lab analyses?

Visit <https://www.mass.gov/forms/pfas-free-sampling-initiative-notice-of-interest-form-for-public-water-systems> to sign up for the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program, or send a request with the information described in the survey (e.g. PWS name, PWS ID#, number of sources already tested, number of sources to be tested, and system population) to program.director-dwp@mass.gov, Subject: "Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program - Sampling questions".

6. How does the PWS get the water sample bottles for the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program?

Once the system signs up for the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program:

- 1) The MassDEP Drinking Water Program or its UMass contractor will contact the PWS to verify the locations of raw and finished water sources to be sampled and arrange for a sample collection timeframe.
- 2) The MassDEP Contracted Laboratory will send a sampling kit to the PWS containing the Chain-of-Custody form and the sample bottles. Return postage will be included.

Note: MassDEP has contracted with four labs to provide the Free PFAS Lab Analyses. Your contacts for any questions regarding the status of your Free PFAS Lab Analyses will be:

- The UMass contractor Technical Assistance Providers at pfas-testing@umass.edu.
- The MassDEP Drinking Water Program at program.director-dwp@mass.gov. Subject: "Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program - Sampling questions".

7. Who collects the water samples for the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program?

The PWS are responsible for collecting the water samples. *Please note: The costs incurred by utilizing contracted certified operators to collect the Free PFAS Lab Analyses samples ARE NOT covered by this program and are the responsibility of the PWS.* There is a training video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrwhwSI-R9M> to demonstrate how to collect drinking water samples for PFAS. The following technical assistance is also available:

- MassDEP UMass contractors at pfas-testing@umass.edu.
- MassDEP technical assistance providers at program.director-dwp@mass.gov, Subject: "Free PFAS Lab Analyses - Sampling questions".

8. Will the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program cover the costs of confirmation sampling?

Community and Non-Transient Non-Community PWS must confirm all initial PFAS results greater than 2 ppt, the Minimum Reporting Level (MRL). MassDEP will cover lab analysis costs to confirm all initial results over 2 ppt during the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program. Lab analysis of the confirmatory sample is part of the free analyses. Transient Non-Community PWS are not required to confirm initial PFAS results, however MassDEP will cover lab analysis costs to confirm all initial results over 14 ppt during the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program.

9. How are PWS informed of the PFAS lab analysis results?

Prior to the availability of eDEP for electronic data reporting (MassDEP will notify all when eDEP data reporting capability is completed):

- Labs will email copies of the lab reports to the PWS for notification and to MassDEP/UMass (MassDEP's contractor for this initiative) for notification and QA/QC of the results. *The PWS may contact MassDEP/the UMass Contractor at pfas-testing@umass.edu with any questions regarding the lab reports.*
- MassDEP/UMass will contact the lab and the PWS to resolve any reporting and/or analysis issues identified during QA/QC. If corrections or clarifications are needed, the lab will email corrected lab reports to the PWS and MassDEP/UMass.
- If no corrections or clarifications are needed, MassDEP will accept the data and enter it into the MassDEP Drinking Water database.
- Once data entry of the results is completed the data will be accessible to the general public via the EEA Data Portal.

When eDEP is available for electronic data reporting:

- The laboratory performing the analysis will report the results through eDEP, MassDEP's online reporting system.
- The lab will share the data with the PWS in eDEP. The lab is responsible for notifying the PWS that the results are available in eDEP for viewing.
- MassDEP will conduct QA/QC on the data submission in eDEP. If any reporting and/or analytical issues are identified during QA/QC, MassDEP/UMass Contractors will discuss with the lab, MassDEP and the PWS to correct any errors. If any corrections or clarifications are needed the laboratory will resubmit the data via eDEP.
- The lab will share the resubmitted data with the PWS and notify the PWS when data is available to view in eDEP.
- If no corrections or clarifications are needed, MassDEP will accept the data and it will be accessible to the general public via the EEA Data Portal.

10. What if PFAS is not detected in the drinking water samples (this means that all PFAS compounds, not just PFAS6 are at a level below the Minimum Reporting Level (MRL))?

If none of the PFAS compounds are detected in the initial samples above the MRL, and the lab report passes MassDEP's QA/QC protocol, no further action is required of the PWS under the Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program. See [Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\) Drinking Water Regulations Quick Reference Guide](#) for additional details regarding PFAS6 sampling deadlines.

11. What are the current requirements and recommendations if PFAS is detected?

See [Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\) Drinking Water Regulations Quick Reference Guide](#) for a summary of requirements regarding confirmatory samples, Public Notices, and increased monitoring. MassDEP's regional offices will be working with PWSs that detect PFAS to ensure that appropriate corrective actions are taken.

12. Does the PWS have to include PFAS results in its Consumer Confidence Report?

Yes. Community (COM) PWS are required to report any detection of any PFAS in its consumer confidence report (CCR). If the PFAS6 detected is over the MCL the CCR must also include potential adverse health effects language. MassDEP will provide PWSs with template CCR information including adverse health effects language. If you choose to use different CCR information or add any system-specific information to the template notice, you must receive written approval from your MassDEP regional office. TNC or NTNC systems must post the CCR information when provided by MassDEP. A PWS with no detections of PFAS may choose to report the results in its CCR to inform its consumers that testing has occurred.

13. Is there free PFAS testing for private wells?

Yes. MassDEP will also be testing select private wells in communities where the majority of the population are not served by PWS to enable MassDEP to assess PFAS levels in groundwater across the Commonwealth. The information collected from both PWS and select private wells will inform MassDEP's strategy for treatment and mitigation of this emerging contaminant. While the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) regulates private wells, MassDEP will work with its UMass Contractor, DPH, local Boards of Health, and other local partners to select and provide free lab analyses for specific private wells. MassDEP will also provide technical assistance information on PFAS for all private well owners as part of its private well guidance and outreach program that will engage Boards of Health and other local partners. For more information about PFAS and the Department's efforts to address PFAS contaminants, please see: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas> or contact MassDEP's Drinking Water Program at program.director-dwp@mass.gov with the Subject: "Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program - Sampling questions".

14. Where can I find out more about PFAS?

Visit the MassDEP PFAS Page:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas>

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Drinking Water Regulations Quick Reference Guide:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-drinking-water-regulations-quick-reference-guide>

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Public Drinking Water Supplies (PWS) – Consolidated Questions and Answers for PWS:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/collated-pfas-qa-for-pws-a-collection-of-the-pfas-qa-for-pws/download>

MassDEP Factsheet - PFAS in Private Wells:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-in-private-well-drinking-water-supplies-faq>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health PFAS Information:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-in-drinking-water>

15. Who can I contact for information or technical assistance on free PFAS samples?

Send an email with your questions to pfas-testing@umass.edu or to Program.director-DWP@mass.gov with the Subject: "Free PFAS Lab Analyses Program - Sampling questions".

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR YOUR SYSTEM. HAVE SOMEONE TRANSLATE IT FOR YOU OR SPEAK WITH SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS IT.

If you need this document translated, please contact MassDEP's Diversity Director, Michelle Waters-Ekanem, Diversity Director/Civil Rights: 617-292-5751 TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370. You may also contact the Drinking Water Program at program.director-dwp@mass.gov.