

Two PFAS compounds, commonly known as forever chemicals, have been detected in the water at the City of Wilmington reservoirs at Burtonville.

PFAS is short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, which are used in firefighting foam and many consumer products, including nonstick frying pans, water-repellent sports gear, stain-resistant rugs, cosmetics and food packaging. The chemical bonds are so strong that they do not degrade or do so only slowly in the environment and remain in a person's bloodstream indefinitely – hence the name 'forever chemicals.'

The compounds that were found in the reservoir water came from firefighting foam that was mandated to be used at the Wilmington Air Park.

The levels found of the two compounds – PFOS and PFHxS – were around 10 to 20 parts per trillion. Those levels were well below the health advisory level issued by U.S. EPA in 2016. However, in June 2022, U.S. EPA updated the health advisory levels to practically zero, meaning any detection of those compounds would be too high.

When the updated health advisory level was issued, the City of Wilmington switched to its other drinking water source – Caesar Creek Lake – and will use that source as much as practical.

The City will use federal funding to conduct a study to determine the best way to be able to again use the City reservoirs by removing the PFAS compounds from the water supply. The City also filed a lawsuit in Federal Court against 3M, the manufacturer of the firefighting foam, to recoup the ongoing costs the presence of the PFAS compounds will force the City to incur.

More information about PFAS chemicals are available from the U.S. EPA website at <https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/questions-and-answers-drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-pfos-genx-chemicals-and-pfbs>