

Preliminary groundwater sampling results indicate contaminants in Airway Heights water wells

By: The City of Airway Heights and Fairchild Air Force Base

AIRWAY HEIGHTS and FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE, Wash. – Preliminary groundwater sampling results obtained by the Air Force for two water wells used to supply the city of Airway Heights indicate Perfluorooctanesulfonic (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acids (PFOA) concentrations above Environmental Protection Agency lifetime Health Advisory (HA) levels. The Air Force is validating the preliminary findings and expects to provide final results to the city within two to three weeks.

Out of an abundance of caution, Airway Heights water customers are advised to not drink city water nor use city water for cooking until the water system is considered free of PFOS/PFOAs. The EPA's HA levels are based on cumulative lifetime exposure from water ingestion, not from skin contact or breathing water vapor, which are not considered to be unsafe. Tap water is safe for activities where water will not be ingested, such as bathing, doing laundry and washing dishes.

Residents and businesses within the City of Airway Heights that are located east of Hayford Road are not affected by this notice as their utility service is through the City of Spokane. Additionally, reverse osmosis and carbon filters have been shown to be effective in reducing or removing PFOS/PFOAs from drinking water.

The City of Airway Heights will be taking a number of steps in the short term to reduce levels of PFOS/PFOA in the city's water supply, including immediately ceasing operation of the affected wells and using the city's water system inter-tie connection with the City of Spokane. Additionally, the City has initiated a flushing routine to remove water with higher concentrations of PFOS/PFOA from the system with the intent of reducing levels of PFOS/PFOA from the city's water system to safe levels within the next 3 to 4 days.

In the interim, both Fairchild AFB and the City of Airway Heights are looking into way to provide clean water to affected residents, which could possibly include.

Longer term projects to reduce PFOS/PFOA in the city's water system may include installation of water treatment filtration systems on each well with elevated PFOS/PFOA levels, and seeking alternative sources of water such as additional water from Spokane.

“We care about the health and wellbeing of our families, neighbors and community partners, and we understand those impacted, or potentially impacted, by this emerging issue have legitimate concerns,” said Col. Ryan Samuelson, Fairchild Air Force Base commander. “We will remain

completely transparent as we work with the city to determine the extent of the PFOS/PFOA contamination and how to quickly and effectively provide clean water. And, while we cannot know the extent to which any past base activities contributed to the PFOS/PFOA concentrations in this area, or what part non-military sources may have played, the Air Force is committed to working with our neighbors and regulatory partners to protect human health and resolve the issue at hand.”

Fairchild AFB conducted sampling of private wells immediately adjacent to the eastern border of the installation in late April after on-base testing near the fence line revealed concentrations above the EPA lifetime HA levels. Additional well sampling was conducted last week, which included the Airway Heights wells.

PFOS/PFOAs are classified by the EPA as “emerging contaminants” and are present in common household items and heat and fire resistant products, including aqueous film forming foam formulations that were used by the Air Force in fire trucks from 1970-2016 including those at Fairchild AFB.

More information about PFOS/PFOA contaminant testing can be found here:

www.epa.gov/assessing-and-managing-chemicals-under-tsca/and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfass-under-tsca

www.fairchild.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1054651/fairchild-proactively-pursuing-environmental-stewardship-through-air-force-init

<http://www.afcec.af.mil/WhatWeDo/Environment/Perfluorinated-Compounds/>

For more information, contact the Fairchild AFB Public Affairs office at (509) 247-5705 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., or email 92arw.pa@us.af.mil; or, you can obtain information from the City of Airway Heights by calling 211.