

Brunswick County Media Release



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US DHHS Issues Report on Health Effects of PFOS and PFOA

Bolivia, NC – Brunswick County is aware of a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on the health effects of PFOS and PFOA, and is working with our partners at the State to determine any additional guidance that can be gleaned from the study.

Due to the nature of the U.S. DHHS study, Brunswick County is working with toxicology and health care professionals at the N.C. DHHS and the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality to better understand the study's results.

PFOS and PFOA are part of a group of compounds known as PFAS compounds, which also includes other emerging compounds like GenX. PFAS compounds are not regulated in drinking water, though federal and state agencies have issued non-enforceable recommendations such as health advisories or goals for some compounds.

From initial analysis, it appears that the N.C. DHHS report and an updated Draft Toxicological Profile include proposals for revised minimum risk levels for PFOS and PFOA, and new minimum risk levels for PFHxS and PFNA. These minimum risk levels are non-enforceable recommendations, similar to health advisories and goals issued by federal and state agencies for other compounds.

The report suggests a revised number of 11 parts per trillion (PPT) for PFOA; Brunswick County's most recent test results showed 10.8 PPT on May 10 and 11.8 PPT on May 17 in finished water.

The report suggests a revised number of 7 PPT for PFOS; Brunswick County's most recent test results showed 13 PPT on May 10 and 14.4 PPT in finished water.

The report suggests a revised number of 74 PPT for PFHxS; Brunswick County's most recent test results showed 4.16 PPT on May 10 and 4.81 PPT on May 17 in finished water.

The report suggests a revised number of 11 PPT for PFNA; Brunswick County's most recent test results showed 1.93 PPT on May 10 and 2.29 PPT on May 17.

“Local health departments across NC rely on the DHHS Public Health doctors and toxicologist to make recommendations concerning public health,” said David Stanley, Brunswick County Director of Health and Human Services. “The information in the report needs to be reviewed in conjunction with them to ensure the most comprehensive public health messaging to our citizens.”

Stanley added that he has been in touch with Dr. Zack Moore, State Epidemiologist and Epidemiology Section Chief for the N.C. DHHS Division of Public Health, and that N.C. DHHS is working to provide additional guidance.

On May 10, Brunswick County's Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to approve construction of low-pressure reverse osmosis treatment at the Northwest Water Treatment Plant. During a presentation in April from the County's engineering firm hired to research and consult on the project, the Commissioners learned about low-pressure reverse osmosis's ability to treat a variety of emerging perfluorinated chemicals, as well as its ability to remove 1,4-Dioxane. The Commissioners determined at the time that low-pressure reverse osmosis would be the most effective and economical long-term treatment method for a variety of compounds, in addition to GenX. Testing at the time, which included testing for PFOS and PFOA, determined that low-pressure reverse osmosis removed 45 PFAS compounds to as close to non-detectable limits as possible. The latest results from the low-pressure reverse osmosis pilot plant indicate that the four PFAS compounds listed in the U.S. DHHS report were reduced to non-detectable levels.

"We appreciate the Commissioners' long-term thinking when planning for water treatment improvements for Brunswick County," said County Manager Ann Hardy. "They anticipated that treatment standards and non-enforceable guidelines might change, and with the planned low-pressure reverse osmosis the County is well-positioned to adjust to changes as they happen."

Bidding and construction of the low-pressure reverse osmosis is expected to begin in June of 2019.

Additional information and updates will be shared as they are available. Updates related to drinking water treatment and standards, as well as Brunswick County's most recent water testing results, are posted online at www.brunswickcountync.gov/genx.

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