

**HORSHAM TOWNSHIP WATER QUALITY**  
**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**  
**Updated 6/24/2016**

**1. Is my drinking water safe?**

The water supplied by the Horsham Water & Sewer Authority (HWSA) does meet all standards set by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act guided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (<https://www.epa.gov/sdwa>), including the more rigorous standards introduced by the EPA on May 19, 2016 as it relates to PFC levels.

If you have a private well, it is highly recommended that you have your water tested for PFCs. Residents with private wells that have not yet been tested, should contact the Eduardo Rivera at the EPA at 215-514-6887 immediately. Test results can be expected in approximately three weeks after testing and will indicate whether or not there is an elevated level of PFCs in the well. Additionally, a number of private wells are being connected to the public water systems. The HWSA is in the process of extending water mains to those homes where there were no distribution lines. The majority of private well owners affected are located close to the public systems and the HWSA is working swiftly to arrange those connections.

**2. What are PFCs?**

PFCs, or perfluorochemicals, are a group of human-made chemicals used in the manufacturing of many everyday products. PFCs ensure that products resist heat, stains, grease, water and oil and have been used widely for items such as nonstick pans, stain-resistant carpet, food packaging (such as fast food wrappers and microwave popcorn bags), etc. As a result of their prevalent use, there is widespread wildlife and human exposure across the globe to several PFCs, most commonly PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate). Both PFOA and PFOS were present in firefighting foam used by the United States Navy in firefighting activities on the Naval Air Base in Willow Grove, PA.

On May 19, 2016, the EPA issued a Lifetime Health Advisory (LHA) level of 70 parts per trillion (ppt), or 0.07 parts per billion (ppb), as the combined concentration of PFOS and PFOA permissible in drinking water. For reference, the last guidance the EPA provided on PFOS and PFOA was in 2009, when it issued a Provisional Health Advisory Level (PHAL) of .4 parts per billion (ppb) for PFOA and .2 parts per billion (ppb) for PFOS. The EPA calculated the permissible levels for its Lifetime Health Advisory with the most vulnerable humans (infants and fetuses) in mind.

**3. What were the levels of PFCs detected in the affected Horsham wells?**

The PFC levels in the wells that were shut down were not significantly above the EPA Lifetime Health Advisory guidelines. All levels are available at [www.horshamwater-sewer.com](http://www.horshamwater-sewer.com)

**4. What actions has the HWSA taken thus far to safeguard my drinking water?**

The HWSA shut down two of the township's 14 public water supply wells in July 2014 when the wells tested for PFOA and PFOS levels above the 2009 EPA guidance.

When the EPA released its 2016 Lifetime Health Advisory in late May, the HWSA and the Township responded immediately to the changes in guidelines and standards. The HWSA, with the support of Horsham Township and the Horsham Township Council, immediately shut down three additional wells. One of these three wells was shut down to comply with the EPA's new health advisory. The other two wells, which tested below the most recent Lifetime Health Advisory, were still shut down out of an abundance of caution on the part of HWSA and the Township. The other nine wells that now supply public drinking water across the township have tested significantly below the revised EPA Lifetime Health Advisory levels.

In addition to the five total public wells that HWSA shut down, the United States Navy and the EPA identified approximately 40 additional private wells in Horsham that are at or above the EPA guidance of 70 parts per trillion (ppt). These private well owners are receiving bottled water from the U.S. Navy.

Since the discovery of these emerging contaminants in the local groundwater resources, HWSA and Horsham Township have maintained ongoing communication with EPA, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the United States Navy and the Pennsylvania National Guard Bureau. We will continue to work in lockstep to ensure our public drinking water is safe.

**5. How can I use my water?**

If you are a customer of HWSA with public water, you may use your water as you are accustomed to doing, as it meets all revised EPA Lifetime Health Advisory levels.

If you have a private well and the United States Navy is supplying you with bottled water, do not ingest your well water. With this exception for human consumption, the EPA has cleared private well water for all other uses, such as gardening, filling pools or bathing.

**6. As a HWSA customer, how do I know which well my water comes from?**

No one well serves any specific property. The water distributed throughout the system may include water from every source as the entire distribution system is interconnected. Various factors affect the movement of water, including user demand, the level of water in the tanks and wells being temporarily taken out of service for routine or other maintenance. Again, the water from each of the wells currently in use is significantly below the new EPA Lifetime Health Advisory.

**7. Did HWSA flush the entire water system, drain all water tanks or clean the inside of all water tanks in the system?**

Fresh water cycles through the system on a daily basis. There is no current evidence that PFCs adhere to the inside of tanks or pipes. PFCs stick to very few substances, with one exception, being organic carbon.

**8. Where are the HWSA wells located throughout the township?**

To protect resident safety and security, we do not disclose the locations of our public wells.

**9. What does the HWSA plan to do with the wells that have been shut off?**

HWSA is currently working to install GAC (granular activated carbon) filtration systems onto the wells that have been shut down due to elevated PFC levels. These GAC filters have proven extremely effective in removing PFCs from the water that passes through them, as PFCs adhere to organic carbon. The process of installing these filtration systems is lengthy, as it requires careful, custom engineering and design work, regulatory approval, installation, testing and ongoing maintenance. HWSA is actively working to have these filtration systems installed as expeditiously as possible. HWSA has set a goal to have the first filtration systems installed by the end of 2016. Wells that have been shut down will receive first priority for GAC filtration system installations, but HWSA will evaluate the possibility of installing GAC filtration systems on all 14 public wells in Horsham.

**10. How much does a GAC filtration system cost?**

The cost varies, not only depending on the location of the well, but also on the amount of water pumped from the well daily. HWSA estimates that a GAC filtration system installation will cost \$1 million per well. The United States Navy has committed to paying for the costs of remediating all wells over the EPA Lifetime Health Advisory levels.

**11. Would a central treatment system be less expensive (and more effective) than placing GAC filters on each well?**

A central treatment system would require a significant amount of infrastructure to move the untreated water from the various well locations to a central point and then back to the distribution system. HWSA anticipates that this approach would disrupt most of Horsham Township for an extended period of time. Individual GAC filtration systems can be installed much sooner than it would take to engineer and construct a central plant. Additionally, individual well filters are extremely efficient for the inevitable long-term maintenance needs of a water system. If one well requires maintenance, only that well would have to be taken offline with no disruption or inconvenience to residents.

**12. I have been drinking water supplied from HWSA for many years. How can I find out if the water has affected my health?**

We understand, and most importantly, respect this concern. However, no one from the HWSA or the Township is a licensed medical professional who can accurately answer this question. We encourage residents to contact the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at 215-814-3149 or 215-814-3141 for individual medical guidance as it relates to PFC exposure and health risks.

**13. Last year, the HWSA said that the drinking water was safe in Horsham Township. What changed?**

Up until May 19, 2016, all public drinking water met the EPA's Provisional Health Advisory Level (PHAL) for PFOA and PFOS. Upon the release of the EPA's Lifetime Health Advisory (LHA) for PFOA and PFOS, the HWSA had to shut down additional wells to ensure compliance and safety. Currently, all wells in use to supply public drinking water in Horsham Township meet the guidelines set forth in the EPA's 2016 Lifetime Health Advisory for PFOA and PFOS.

**14. Will this situation affect my property value?**

The HWSA and Horsham Township have worked together to ensure that the township website contains updated, factual information which the local real estate community can share with new, prospective township residents. Anyone interested in selling a property in Horsham Township can confidently tell a prospective buyer that the public drinking water meets current EPA guidelines.

**15. How can I have my tap water tested?**

If you want to have your water tested, the EPA suggests you use a lab which is approved to use the EPA 537 method, a specialized method for the detection of PFCs. Here is the EPA link to suggested laboratories. <https://www.epa.gov/dwucmr/list-laboratories-approved-epa-third-unregulated-contaminant-monitoring-rule-ucmr-3>

EPA representatives have recommended the following local company who can facilitate the testing with one of these labs, including taking the sample from your home.

Analytical Laboratories, Inc.  
4208 Bethlehem Pike  
Telford, PA 18969  
215-723-6466

Additionally, the HWSA and Horsham Township are exploring a water testing program in an assortment of neighborhoods throughout the township. While it will not be possible to sample every tap, we intend to sample several taps in each neighborhood.

**16. Do you recommend the use of a home filter?**

Government standards are currently being developed to test and certify home filters.

However, there are currently no home filters that have been approved by the EPA or the Pennsylvania DEP.

While we have been approached by a number of organizations that claim to have effective home filtration products, we would never recommend them without certification of their efficacy from the EPA or Pennsylvania DEP. We encourage residents to reach out to the EPA or the Pennsylvania DEP to formally request a credentialed recommendation on home filters.

**17. Do you have any town halls or public meetings planned regarding this topic?**

Yes. HWSA and Horsham Township made a formal request to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the EPA to come to Horsham Township to answer resident questions. We expect that this request will be honored in the near term, and will inform residents of the meeting date and location. We realize that many residents weren't able to ask all of the questions that they had at the meetings organized by the United States Navy on May 24 and May 25, so HWSA and Horsham Township leadership remain committed to holding a town hall for residents. This is a top priority.

**18. How can I be sure I am receiving all communication and updates about drinking water in Horsham Township?**

First, send an e-mail with the subject "SUBSCRIBE" to [water@horsham.org](mailto:water@horsham.org). Then, be sure to continually check [www.horsham.org](http://www.horsham.org) and <http://www.horshamwater-sewer.com> for any posted information.

**19. I have a question that wasn't answered in this document. What should I do?**

If you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to call the Horsham Township Water Hotline at 215-907-0034 or email [water@horsham.org](mailto:water@horsham.org).

*Please note that this FAQ document will continue to be updated with new questions and updated information as it becomes available. The latest version of the document will always be posted on [Horsham.org](http://Horsham.org)*