

Health Department responds to Gadsden Water Works and Sewer Board's recent perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) levels

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) continue to coordinate with the Gadsden Water Works and Sewer Board to monitor for two PFCs, perfluorooctane sulfate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), in the community's local water system. This monitoring has been taking place since May 2016 as a result of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) health advisory.

As part of the monitoring put in place in May, the ADPH has been notified that the two most recent water testing results from Gadsden showed levels of 84 and 82 parts per trillion. Concentrations confirmed to be consistently above 70 parts per trillion are subject to the EPA recommendations listed in the final health advisory. Over the last 18 weeks, including these two samples, the average of the Gadsden water samples for the levels of PFOA and PFOS is 70 parts per trillion. Because these two recent samples represent an elevation in the levels, monitoring of the water system will continue.

State Toxicologist, Dr. John Guarisco, of the Alabama Department of Public Health states, "The health department, in coordination with ADEM, is monitoring the situation and providing information regarding the EPA health advisory and recent reported levels." Dr. Guarisco reminds affected consumers that the EPA advisory suggests that sensitive populations such as pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and formula fed infants served by identified water systems consider using alternate sources of drinking water. Other people served by these systems may also consider these steps.

According to ADEM records, as of September 2016, the following systems are currently purchasing water from Gadsden Water Works and Sewer Board: Highland Water Authority, Northeast Etowah County Water Co-op, Rainbow City Utilities Board, and Whorton Bend Water & Fire Protection Authority.

EPA defines PFCs as a diverse group of compounds resistant to heat, water and oil. For decades, they have been used in hundreds of industrial applications and consumer products such as carpeting, apparel, upholstery, food paper wrappings, fire-fighting foams and metal plating. PFCs have been found at very low levels both in the environment and in the blood samples of the general U.S. population.

As additional monitoring data becomes available, ADEM will provide that information to ADPH for appropriate recommendations, and will continue to make the data available on its publicly accessible eFile system.

Any questions regarding monitoring should be directed to ADEM at (334) 271-7955, and questions regarding health-related matters should be directed to ADPH at (334) 206-5971.