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## Town of Natick • Public Works

Dear Water Customers:

We are closely monitoring a family of chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that have been detected in some public water supplies in Massachusetts and across the nation. Recently, in October 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection issued a new drinking water standard for the sum of six PFAS compounds (PFAS6). This new standard requires all Massachusetts public water suppliers to test for PFAS. The sum of PFAS6 may not exceed 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L), also equal to 20 parts per trillion (ppt).

The Natick DPW Water/Sewer Division has a mission to deliver clean and reliable water, and we are always concerned about potential threats to our water supply. We already test regularly for hundreds of regulated and unregulated contaminants, and if above the standard, or maximum contaminant level (MCL), take necessary measures to treat the drinking water.

The Natick DPW Water/Sewer Division is testing for the presence of the PFAS6 and will make those results available to the public after they are returned by the laboratory and confirmed by follow-up testing. We anticipate this information will be available in January 2021.

With relatively recent advances in laboratory testing, the presence of PFAS can be found in parts per trillion whereas in the past it would be undetected in parts per million or billion. In 2013, the Water/Sewer Division tested for PFAS at the higher level parts per billion and found no detects. If testing with today's advanced technology shows PFAS6 levels exceed the new state standards, please be assured that we will take immediate action to work toward compliance with the regulations and communicate those plans with the public.

PFAS are a family of chemicals used for nonstick, stain-resistant and water-proof coatings, and in numerous consumer products, industrial uses, and firefighting foams. Manufacturing of certain PFAS was discontinued in the U.S. decades ago, but they may still be used in imported products. PFAS are resilient and do not degrade easily. As a result, they are widely found in the environment as products are disposed of and PFAS leaches into the soil and water, finding its way to food and drinking water sources.

PFAS is ubiquitous, and in the United States and other industrialized countries, most people have concentrations of these compounds in their blood. The good news is the levels have been dropping as use of certain PFAS have been discontinued. A 2015-2016 federal study found an 82% drop in PFOS and 70% drop in PFOA in the general population, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

MassDEP recommends that consumers in a sensitive subgroup (pregnant or nursing women, infants and people diagnosed by their health care provider to have a compromised immune system), are advised not to consume, drink, or cook with water when the level of PFAS6 is above 20 ppt. These individuals are advised to use alternative sources of water such as bottled water tested for PFAS or in-home filtration systems certified to remove PFAS by independent testing groups.

Scientists are still learning about the health effects of exposures to mixtures of PFAS. MassDEP states consuming water with PFAS6 above the drinking water standard does not mean that adverse effects will occur, and that the degree of risk depends on the level of chemicals and the duration of exposure. There are scientific studies that suggest potential links between exposure to certain PFAS in the environment and health effects. The studies have looked at the effects on the development of fetuses and infants, the thyroid, the liver, kidneys, hormone levels and the immune system, as well as if a cancer risk exists for people exposed to levels well above the drinking water standard.

As we await further scientific study, MassDEP has acted to set a drinking water standard. As your public water supplier, we strive to always comply with drinking water standards and will conduct the necessary testing to ensure compliance. We understand that you may have questions and concerns. We invite you to call to discuss this issue with the professional staff of The Natick DPW Water/Sewer Division. Please, call with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely

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P.S - If you wish to learn more about PFAS, visit [www.safewatermass.org](http://www.safewatermass.org), a website developed by the Massachusetts Water Works Association to provide information to our consumers and links to reliable sources of additional information. Additional information can also be found on the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection website at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas>.