

## WARREN COUNTY WATER & SEWER DEPARTMENT

### **Warren County's Response to the US EPA's New Health Advisories for PFAS**

August 5, 2022

Warren County prides itself on providing quality water services to our customers in a cost-effective manner as we continue to meet all regulatory standards. On June 15, 2022, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued new Health Advisory Levels to mitigate the risk of chemicals in drinking water. These chemicals are referred to as PFAS chemicals.

PFAS stands for perfluoralkyl and polyfluoralkyl substances. These are a group of manufactured chemicals that have been used in consumer products since the 1940's. They can be found in the manufacture of non-stick coatings, clothing, carpet, and food wrappers as well as in foam fire fighting agents. These compounds typically do not break down under normal environmental conditions, and as such have been called "forever chemicals". It is not uncommon for these chemicals to be found in microscopic traces in drinking water and in the bloodstream of people.

#### **What is the EPA's Health Advisory Level?**

Health advisory levels are the first step in the EPA's process of creating new regulations. This is generally a lengthy process with much review and oversight. There is no such thing as zero in science and therefore research is conducted to determine an acceptable risk level for public health.

The EPA has set the new interim Health Advisory levels for two PFAS chemicals, PFOA and PFOS at 0.004 parts per trillion and 0.02 parts per trillion respectively. These are extremely low amounts. For perspective, 1 part per trillion is equal to 1 drop of water in 20 Olympic size swimming pools.

Health Advisories are not enforceable like regulations; however, they do provide guidance as the EPA prepares a formal regulation. The health advisory level is considered the minimum concentration of a compound which may present a health risk to an individual over a lifetime of exposure.

#### **What are the levels in Warren County's drinking water?**

Warren County has 4 sources of water that are used to provide treated drinking water to our customers. About 46% of our customers receive water from our Richard A. Renneker Plant, 39% of our customers receive water from our Franklin Area Plant, 13% of our customers receive purchased water from Greater Cincinnati Water Works and 2% of our customers receive purchased water from the City of Springboro.

Our sampling of water has detected low levels of PFOS in only the Richard A. Renneker Plant. At the Richard A. Renneker Plant sampling has shown PFOS levels ranging from non-detectable to 8.57 parts per trillion. These are well below the previous Health Advisory Levels (70 ppt) but above the updated levels. All other PFAS compounds for which the EPA has issued Health Advisory Levels are non-detectable.

#### **What is Warren County doing about these compounds?**

Warren County will continue to monitor both source and treated water at all plants. We will continue to work with the EPA to aggressively sample and if a source upstream is identified, will work to reduce, or eliminate the source.

We anticipate the U.S EPA to develop regulatory levels within the next two years. In turn the Ohio EPA will be responsible for enforcing these levels and will likely adopt stricter requirements on all public water systems. Warren County will work closely with the Ohio EPA to determine additional steps in treatment if necessary. Although the compounds are not an immediate health threat and Warren County drinking water meets all current drinking water regulations, we will continue to explore operational and treatment modifications to minimize PFAS levels in the drinking water. For more information on PFAS please visit <https://www.epa.gov/pfas>.