

Sierra Club Gender, Equity and Environment Program

# PFAS

**ACTION KIT 2018**



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# PFAS ACTION KIT 2018

## Overview

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Communities around the United States are facing grave threats to their drinking water and health due to Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). This class of chemicals are widely used to make carpets, fabrics for furniture, paper packaging for food and other materials and are resistant to water, grease, or stains. They're pervasive; they can't be broken down in an environment. PFAS chemicals effectively poison water sources. Right now, reports show that more than 16 million Americans are drinking PFAS-

contaminated water. This contamination is strongly linked to cancer, thyroid problems, reproductive system damage and impairments to children's growth and development.

**As a grassroots organization, Sierra Club works with affected communities to address PFAS and other toxic water contaminants. We demand full clean-up in affected communities and an end to ongoing uses of PFAS chemicals.**

# Asks

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Companies and government agencies who have known about PFAS contamination for years must be held accountable, pay for damage already done and take immediate action to protect public health.

- Millions of people haven't been informed that their drinking water contains PFAS chemicals. EPA and state governments need to retest drinking water supplies using a method that captures the full scope of PFAS contamination and detects PFAS chemicals at low levels.
- States need to set drinking water standards that are protective of children's health; Independent scientists advocate for exposures in water of less than 10 parts per trillion (ppt) for all PFAS chemicals.
- Contaminated water supplies must be treated to remove PFAS. Polluters, not communities, must pay the full cost of cleanup.
- The EPA, the military, and states must take immediate steps to control the use of PFAS-

containing fire fighting foams at airports, military bases, and residential fires.

- The military must inform and immediately take action to remediate the damage inflicted on our service members and families who have been exposed to PFAS from the use of fluorine-based aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) on military bases. The Department of Defense must clean up any site that exceeds 10 ppt in PFAS contamination.
- Federal and state governments must end the use of PFAS in food packaging, carpet, stain-treated fabric, waterproof clothing, cosmetics paper products, and other products that directly expose people to these chemicals. Manufacturers must not be allowed to replace harmful PFAS chemicals with similarly toxic and environmentally persistent alternatives.

[Read more "asks" for federal and state-specific policymakers](#)

# Talking Points

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- We now know that PFAS chemicals are linked to cancer, harm the immune and thyroid systems, damage the developing fetus, and may permanently affect children's brain development and behavior.
- The chemicals can't be broken down in the environment, build-up in people and wildlife, and cause irreversible damages.
- Everyone, no matter your zip code, gender or race, deserves clean drinking water. But when it comes to PFAS, women and children are disproportionately harmed by these contaminants. Failure to act is a grave environmental injustice.
- The health of moms, kids, and future generations depend on strong action by states and the federal government.
- PFAS chemicals are contaminating American drinking water, yet millions of people have not been told that their drinking water is contaminated, nor have they been provided clean drinking water.
- It's time for the EPA to get serious, not just hosting listening sessions, and take action on PFAS by holding polluter companies responsible and demanding they pay for cleanup.
- The danger of PFAS contamination is well-known, but federal agencies continue to delay meaningful action while progressive states are rushing — despite inadequate information and resources — to act on PFAS. States need the resources and information that the EPA is failing to provide.





# What Must Be Done

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The Environmental Protection Agency, US military, and state governments **must take action** to limit PFAS uses, hold polluters accountable, and clean up contaminated places.

## **SUCCESSFUL FIRST STEPS IN VARIOUS STATES:**

### **1. States are proposing and setting rigorous clean up standards for PFAS chemicals in drinking water:**

- o [New Jersey](#) set enforceable cleanup levels for PFAS in drinking water in 2017. It requires water treatment for supplies with more than 14 ppt of PFOA, and 13 ppt for PFNA, and proposed a clean-up level of 13 ppt for PFOS.
- o In July 2018 [Vermont](#) announced emergency PFAS rules for five compounds (PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS, PFHpA, and PFNA). The total of these 5 PFAS chemicals cannot exceed 20 ppt in drinking water.
- o In July 2018, [California](#) proposed preliminary notification levels at 14 ppt for PFOA and 13 ppt for PFOS.

### **2. States and communities are suing to ensure that polluters pay the cost of cleanup:**

Several states have settled with companies who make fluorochemicals for polluting industrial sites; Michigan settled with chemical company 3M for \$850 million to clean up a polluted site

at the Wolverine shoe factory. However, states are increasingly looking for manufacturing companies to also pay for cleaning up sites contaminated by PFAS-containing AFFF foam. The state of [New York](#) is suing 3M and other fluorochemical producers and [Michigan](#) is engaged in a similar lawsuit.

### **3. Some states, firefighters, and airports are taking action to end the use of toxic PFAS-containing fire fighting foams and take back products that are stockpiled at airports and fire stations:**

- o Washington enacted a law that [bans the use of AFFF where not required by law](#). This will end the use of AFFF with PFAS chemicals for training and in small airports and residential fire fighting, averting future water contamination.
- o The [Michigan Fire Marshall](#) has surveyed local fire departments on inventories and historic uses of PFAS-containing AFFF foams - it will develop a strategy to gather and dispose of them. The [State of Massachusetts](#) is gathering AFFF foam manufactured before 2003, but not newer foams. It is not yet clear how they will dispose of it.
- o Some major airports, like Heathrow Airport in London, no longer use PFAS-containing AFFF foams.

# Engagement

Get engaged in our efforts to address PFAS contamination and protect your community from PFAS chemicals!

## SAMPLE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To find local papers and submission guidelines, click [here](#).

### HEALTH/COMMUNITY SAFETY:

Politics aside, the issue of drinking water contamination is serious and one that circumvents state borders, affects families, and does not discriminate. We now know that the persistent, cancer-causing PFAS chemicals are contaminating millions of Americans' drinking water sources and the threat is rapidly spreading. Still, millions of people haven't been told they are drinking PFAS-contaminated water and the EPA is moving at a glacial pace in dealing with the issue. These issues persist all while new sites are detected every week. Communities with contaminated water are not getting the help they need. Companies that make PFAS chemicals should pay the price in removing them from drinking water. EPA needs to stop stalling and take immediate action in getting this crisis cleaned up.

### NOT ONE MORE FLINT:

We know the EPA failed when it came to Flint, Michigan. Right now, they can play an instrumental role in helping our country prevent another public health crisis like Flint, but not unless Interim Administrator Wheeler gets serious in making drinking water contamination a priority. It's one thing to hold "listening sessions" and pontificate about the problem, but EPA needs to take meaningful action to identify pollution and clean up contaminated communities. Cancer-causing PFAS chemicals are contaminating millions of Americans' drinking water, and it is still completely legal to discharge PFAS chemicals into the environment.

Some progressive states are trying to address the problem. But like we saw in Flint, states lack the funding and information necessary to protect their residents from such large and serious threats. New "hotspots" of PFAS contamination are being discovered every week on military bases, airports, and industrial sites, contaminating thousands of water supplies. This matter is urgent. It's time for the EPA and states to get serious about protecting American families over industry.

## SAMPLE OP-EDS (VIEW ONLY)

- [North Carolina](#) "EPA and DoD are downplaying dangers of poisoned water" Mac Montgomery, former Lieutenant colonel at U.S Army.
- [Colorado](#) "PFAS Contamination Needs Action from Pruitt's EPA", by Fran Silva-Blayley, of Sierra Club's Fountain Creek Water Sentinels Program
- [Michigan](#) "PFAS Contamination Demands Federal, State Action" from MLIVE Editorial Board
- For guidance on writing and submitting longer opinion pieces, [see here](#). If you would like help drafting an op-ed, contact Courtney Bourgoïn at [courtney.bourgoïn@sierraclub.org](mailto:courtney.bourgoïn@sierraclub.org).

## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA

### TWITTER POST:

- 16+ million Americans across more than half of U.S. states including [your state] drink water contaminated with industrial chemicals like #PFAS. Tell @EPA to get serious, go beyond “listening sessions” and remove PFAS from our drinking water! <https://t.co/m5ty71zZdH>
- What’s in our water @EPA? Everyday you don’t take action on #PFAS, you are putting families, our military and communities at risk. Do your job and get PFAS out of our water! #TakeAction <https://t.co/m5ty71zZdH>

### FACEBOOK POST:

Across the country, PFAS contamination is tainting our drinking water. The chemicals are persistent, they can’t be easily broken down and cause serious health concerns—cancer, thyroid problems and danger during pregnancy. It’s time for the EPA to stop stalling and take action on top of their listening sessions. Tell the EPA to remove PFAS from our drinking water and end industrial use NOW --->

<https://t.co/m5ty71zZdH>

### INSTAGRAM POST:

In communities from Colorado to Michigan, PFAS contamination is tainting our drinking water and making us sick. The chemicals are persistent, they can’t be broken down, cause cancer and harm children’s health. It’s time for the EPA to stop stalling and take action on top of their listening sessions. Tell the EPA to remove PFAS from our drinking water and end industrial use NOW! --->

<https://t.co/m5ty71zZdH>

## PICTURES FOR USE

- [Water Sentinels](#)
- [I <3 Clean Water](#)
- [Mike Brune quote](#)
- [Posters](#)

## REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [Sierra Club Community Fact Sheet: What You Need to Know About Your Water](#)
- News Series: Sharon’s Lerner’s [The Teflon Toxin](#) series in The Intercept
- Map of contaminated drinking water: [The EWG/SSEHRI map](#) of PFAS water contamination with more than 170 sites of documented PFAS contamination over 40 states.
- Blog: [What EPA Can Do On PFAS](#)
- Blog [Disproportionate Effects of PFAS on Women and Children](#)
- Technical background on PFAS chemicals by the Interstate Technology Regulatory Council [Factsheets on PFAS](#)



### ACTION ALERT

To take action on this urgent issue, [click here and share with your networks.](#)

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See [sc.org/pfastoolkit](https://www.sc.org/pfastoolkit) for live links

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