

# STILLWATER CITY NEWS

Spring 2024

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## DRINKING WATER QUALITY UPDATE FOR STILLWATER

The City of Stillwater recently learned that some of its drinking water wells produce water that exceeds the Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) Health Based Guidance Values for PFAS. Preliminary testing had indicated higher levels of PFAS, and this was confirmed by follow-up testing. There is no immediate health risk posed by Stillwater's drinking water at this time as the city is not using the affected wells.

PFAS are emerging contaminants – meaning that there is a new awareness or understanding about how they affect public health. PFAS, like other emerging contaminants, are the focus of active research and study, which means that new information is released frequently.

While there are currently no enforceable federal or state standards for the acceptable amount of PFAS in drinking water, MDH provides testing and monitoring and advises cities when levels of PFAS in drinking water are above MDH's Health Based Guidance Values.

When preliminary testing indicated higher levels of PFAS, the City proactively stopped using Well #6 in April 2023, approximately six months prior to receiving an advisory letter from MDH in October 2023. The City also proactively stopped using a second well (Well #10) in April 2023 in anticipation of the proposed EPA Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) that is not yet in effect.

In January 2024, MDH released updated, more stringent Health Based Guidance Values on PFAS, which resulted in a third well (Well #9) exceeding the Health Based Guidance Values. Once again, the City has not used this well since December 2023.

The City is working to evaluate short- and long-term solutions to meet these updated guidance values. The City is working with an engineering firm to evaluate options for PFAS mitigation that the City can consider as shutting down wells is not a long-term, viable solution.

### What is PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) are a family of manmade chemicals that have been widely used in consumer products since the 1940's. PFAS can be found in household items including

- Water-repellent clothing, non-stick cookware, paints, sealants, wood stain, and some personal care products.
- Food packaging, including grease resistant paper, microwave popcorn bags, pizza boxes and candy wrappers.
- Food, including fish caught from water contaminated by PFAS and dairy products from livestock exposed to PFAS.

Taken from the Environmental Protection Agency: [PFAS Explained | US EPA](#)

The City will also be hiring an independent laboratory to take additional samples of water from the City's water system. The data from this testing, along with the engineering evaluation, will help the City determine the appropriate path forward. To pay for the cost of the engineering evaluation and testing, the City just received notification that it was successful in securing a \$102,000 grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Drinking Water Planning and Design Funds for PFAS Treatment.

The City of Stillwater is committed to providing safe, high quality drinking water to its customers. To learn more or to stay informed, please visit our website at [www.stillwatermn.gov/waterupdates](http://www.stillwatermn.gov/waterupdates). You are also welcome to contact the city at [waterupdates@stillwatermn.gov](mailto:waterupdates@stillwatermn.gov) or (651)430-8830. Please also sign up on the city's website to receive "Drinking Water Updates."

### What level of PFAS in drinking water is safe?

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) uses health-based values to evaluate health risks from individual PFAS. Health guidance values are designed to protect the most vulnerable populations for up to a lifetime of exposure. If more than one type of PFAS is found in drinking water, MDH evaluates their additive health risk using the Health Risk Index.

There is little to no health risk from drinking water with PFAS levels at or below guidance values. Drinking water with PFAS levels above guidance values or the Health Risk Index poses a potential health concern. It does not represent an immediate health risk. The guidance values are based on multiple safety factors and are overprotective for most people.

Community water systems with elevated PFAS can take actions to reduce PFAS levels through treatment or reduced pumping from contaminated wells.

To see PFAS testing results in community water systems, visit Interactive Dashboard for PFAS Testing in Drinking Water <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/pfasmapp.html>

To learn more about testing private wells for PFAS, safe levels in drinking water, health effects, and ongoing activities, visit Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/topics/pfcs.html>