

General acknowledgments regarding EPA announcement for PFAS

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently revised its previous stance on PFAS, which are sometimes called “forever chemicals,” to be reduced in the U.S. water supply by 2029 with specialized testing set to begin in 2027. Grand Strand is currently in full compliance with all EPA and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) requirements and is committed to maintaining this compliance in the future.

The mission of GSWSA has always been to provide water and wastewater services that protect public health and the environment, promote economic development, and enhance the quality of life for its residential and business customers and tourists visiting our beautiful area.

What are PFAS?

PFAS are a large group of man-made chemicals that don't occur naturally in the environment. They have been widely used in various industries because of their unique properties to repel oil and water and resist heat and chemical reactions. These characteristics have made them popular in products like non-stick cookware, water-resistant clothing, cleaning products, and some firefighting foams. They are present in the wastewater of many manufacturing operations that use them. They can only be removed with new types of water filtration technologies.

How do you reduce PFAS from the drinking water supply if it exists?

There are several different technologies available for water utilities to reduce PFAS from drinking water and water systems, plus home options if customers are interested. GSWSA is proactively working with engineers to research the advanced technologies it will take to meet the newly imposed Federal Government requirements toward full compliance before the 2029 deadline.

If PFAS are in the water, where are they coming from?

GSWSA is in compliance with the EPA's and DHEC's current, strict regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The new drinking water regulation is a part of the EPA's PFAS Strategic Roadmap to address PFAS chemicals by controlling them at the source and holding polluters accountable. The EPA estimates that approximately 4,100 to 6,700 public drinking water systems across the country will be taking action to reduce PFAS in order to meet the new standards. So, it is a national issue other water utilities just like GSWSA will be addressing.

PFAS come from various industrial and commercial sources that release PFAS in their wastewater into rivers and streams. Curtailing that PFAS pollution is part of the solution.

So, what is GSWSA doing about the new EPA PFAS warnings?

First, GSWSA is currently in full compliance with the EPA's and DHEC's existing regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems.

GSWSA is investigating the occurrence of PFAS chemicals in our water supplies. Compliance with the new drinking water regulation is to be determined on the basis of a four-quarter running annual average. We are therefore conducting PFAS testing to determine our likely compliance status for when the regulation becomes effective and enforceable in 2029.

We are also proactively working with engineers to investigate potential PFAS treatment solutions at Grand Strand. Should our ongoing testing ultimately find PFAS levels above the new regulatory levels, we are prepared to implement a technology-based treatment solution to PFAS to be fully compliant with the new PFAS standards in 2029.

The new EPA regulations look ahead to 2027 when water utilities in the U.S. will be required to test for Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) of six specific PFAS chemicals. Like other water utilities across the country, GSWSA is proactively preparing for the newly announced 2027 testing requirements and will be working to be fully compliant with PFAS reduction solutions by 2029.

How does this impact me?

Right now, the important thing to know is that your water provider is in full compliance with all state and federal regulations. GSWSA meets current testing guidelines and is ahead of the timeline for PFAS testing that will go into effect in 2027. GSWSA will keep customers updated throughout this five-year timeline.