



PFAS: Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances

You may have received our letter regarding PFAS or maybe you have heard about them in the news and have further questions. This document will hopefully answer your questions specifically about CEW&SA and guide you to resources that have been published by organizations who have conducted extensive research.

What are PFAS? PFAS are man-made chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products worldwide since the 1940s. They have been used to make nonstick cookware, water-repellent clothing, stain resistant fabrics and carpets, some cosmetics, some firefighting foams, and products that resist grease, water, and oil. They are long lasting chemicals having components which break down very slowly over time. Even though these chemicals have been manufactured for nearly 80 years, there are many unknowns because they are newly researched chemicals by the EPA. The main unknown is they are still trying to understand the potential health effects and the acceptable levels of exposure.

Where do PFAS come from and where can they be found in Alabama? PFAS can be found in many different places including air, soil, water, and commonly used items. The most common sources of PFAS in drinking water are from waste discharges made by PFAS manufacturers to waterbodies, large applications of Aqueous Firefighting Foam (AFFF), and landfill leachate where PFAS was discarded. Major known sources of PFAS in Alabama are a chemical company in Decatur that manufactured PFAS which discharged their waste to the Tennessee River and carpet manufacturers in Northeast Georgia that applied non-stick coatings to their products which discharged their waste to the Coosa River. Other localized sites in Alabama are places which had large amounts of AFFF applied to fight fires and firefighting training facilities.

What source of water does CEW&SA use? CEW&SA withdraws water from Lake Martin, a reservoir on the Tallapoosa River and has a contract with Alabama Power allowing us to utilize up to 12 million gallons per day. This water is pumped to our filter plant where it is treated before it is delivered to our customers. The location CEW&SA withdraws from has a drainage area of approximately 14 square miles and is mostly forested in Elmore County. Having a relatively smaller drainage area, a primary land use of forested, and no manufactures of PFAS in the watershed reduces the potential for PFAS contamination.

What do you know about Lake Martin and PFAS? The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) conducts water quality and fish tissue sampling on Lake Martin and other reservoirs on the Tallapoosa River chain. The water quality sampling, tests for contaminants by taking samples at different locations throughout the lake and at different depths throughout the water column. The fish tissue sampling is conducted by electroshocking fish and analyzing the filets to see if they have accumulated contaminants throughout their lifespan. ADEM will review the data that was collected and if the results are elevated above acceptable levels, they will classify the waterbody as impaired for the contaminant(s). To date, ADEM has not classified Lake Martin or the Tallapoosa River as impaired for PFAS. The Tennessee River watershed is the only location with waterbodies classified as impaired for PFAS in Alabama. If you would like to see the state of your watershed, visit <https://mywaterway.epa.gov/>.



What is CEW&SA doing about PFAS and what is required by regulations? Currently CEW&SA is collecting quarterly PFAS samples of treated water as it leaves the filter plant. This sampling has been mandated by ADEM and the EPA for informational purposes. These sample results are also being used by CEW&SA staff so that future plans can be made if they are necessary. Currently there are no regulations for PFAS, however the EPA is in the process of developing Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for two PFAS compounds, PFOS and PFOA. Depending on the MCLs the EPA sets will determine how CEW&SA will move forward. The sample results thus far have resulted in no detections to very low detections and from these results compared to the MCLs, it will be determined if any additional treatment is needed. CEW&SA will continue to meet all State and Federal requirements and will implement any necessary treatment to ensure our customers have safe water to drink.

Is bottled water safer than my tap water? Bottled water companies are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and have their own regulations governing the standards of bottled water. CEW&SA is regulated by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the Environmental Protection Agency through the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The FDA uses the same standards as the SDWA and required bottlers to test their water on similar schedules to CEW&SA. Even some brands of bottled water use tap water from a public water system and will employ an additional process in order to sell it as a new product. It is recommended to read the label on all bottled water products and visit any informational links listed on the bottles.

What can I do to reduce my exposure to PFAS? The EPA has put together guidance on how you can possibly reduce the risk of exposure to PFAS at <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/meaningful-and-achievable-steps-you-can-take-reduce-your-risk>. CEW&SA ensures that our product has been treated to the highest *quality*, it was done with the upmost of *integrity* and we are providing the best *service* to our customers.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-explained>

<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/overview.html>

<https://adem.alabama.gov/programs/water/drinkingwater/pfaspage.cnt>