



MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 5, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and
Council Members

FROM: Timothy Thomure, P.E.
Director, Tucson Water

SUBJECT: Groundwater Investigation Conducted by Tucson Water Identifies High Levels of PFAS North of the Tucson International Airport

Drinking water provided by the City is not impacted and continues to be safe

Mayor and Council have long directed Tucson Water to make all efforts necessary to protect public health and provide safe drinking water to the community. As part of our proactive efforts to protect public health, Tucson Water has extended its testing of groundwater for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in parts of the Tucson basin that are ***not connected*** to the drinking water system. Recent tests of long-retired wells and ADEQ/EPA-owned monitoring sites in the area north of the Arizona Air National Guard (AANG) facilities at Tucson International Airport (TIA) were conducted, and the preliminary results show PFAS concentrations of more than 10,000 parts per trillion (ppt).

PFOA and PFOS (the two PFAS compounds for which an EPA Health Advisory has been set at 70 ppt) are not detected in drinking water served by Tucson Water, and have never been present in our drinking water above the Health Advisory.

The water sampled is not part of the Tucson Water system and does not present an immediate threat to the drinking water provided by the City. There are a number of privately owned wells, either active or inactive, in the area. These wells are not connected to Tucson Water's system.

The PFAS levels that we discovered in these monitoring sites are orders of magnitude higher than we detect and effectively remove at the Tucson Airport Remediation Project nearby. This new information helps us remain vigilant in protecting our drinking water system from these chemicals, and it also gives us a better idea of where they are coming from. As directed by Mayor and Council, the City is determined to hold accountable those parties who are responsible for the presence of PFAS in our region's aquifers.

The City of Tucson is providing this information to public health and environmental officials, and agencies that may be associated with, or affected by, PFAS releases in the area. Tucson Water is also committed to providing this information and any relevant updates to its customers.

The water utility is closely monitoring all of its active production wells in the area to ensure they are not impacted. Tucson Water follows an operational target of 18 parts per trillion (ppt) or less for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water. It has also adopted an operational target of 47 ppt for PFHxS and PFHxA, two additional unregulated PFAS compounds. These targets are among the most stringent in the nation, well below any federal guidelines.

cc: Michael J. Ortega, P.E., City Manager
Albert Elias, Assistant City Manager
Joyce Garland, Assistant City Manager and Chief Financial Officer