

# Discontinuing the use of toxic firefighting foams in trainings

House Bill 19-1279  
Fact Sheet



## Background

Some fire fighting foams contain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (also known as PFAS chemicals). PFAS chemicals are a family of human-made chemicals. They have been used for decades in products like food packaging, carpets, and other household items but also in fire protection equipment and fire fighting foam. Because PFAS chemicals are so widely used, nearly all people have measurable levels of PFAS chemicals in their blood.

Firefighting foam with PFAS chemicals can get into water and contaminate water in wells and drinking water supplies, as well as expose fire fighters and others to the toxic foam. To date, the historic use of firefighting foam containing PFAS has contaminated the drinking water of nearly 100,000 Coloradans which communities are in the process of mitigating.

The use of firefighting foams containing PFAS chemicals is an emerging and urgent public health challenge where action is needed to avoid future contamination and to reduce exposure to firefighters and Coloradans. Health effects from PFAS chemicals may include pregnancy complications, liver damage, high cholesterol, and others. Development of symptoms depends on how much you are exposed to, how long you are exposed, and other personal factors including age, lifestyle, and your overall health. People who are concerned about exposure to PFAS chemicals should talk to their health care provider.

## How do you dispose of firefighting foam containing PFAS?

All firefighting foam, regardless of class, should be handled according to manufacturer specifications and/or by companies who manage hazardous waste.

Clean Harbors Environmental and Veolia are confirmed hazardous waste disposal companies in Colorado that will dispose of foam containing PFAS chemicals.

Fire departments should consider using fluorine-free foams instead of fluorinated foams.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is planning to work with the fire fighting community to provide additional guidance.

## What types of firefighting foams have PFAS chemicals?

There are two major types of firefighting foam, Class A and Class B. Class A foams are used to extinguish fires caused by wood, paper, and plants. Class A foams generally do not contain PFAS. Class B foam is used to put out fires caused by flammable liquids like gasoline, oil, and jet fuel.

Class B foams can be divided into two categories, fluorinated foams and fluorine-free foams. Fluorinated foams contain PFAS chemicals, and fluorine-free foams do not. Many Class B foams are aqueous film forming foams or AFFF. All AFFF foams contain PFAS chemicals.



## Toxic foam banned for training

Beginning Aug. 2, 2019, no one can use foam containing PFAS chemicals for training or for testing fire suppression systems.



## How can you find out if your firefighting foam contains PFAS chemicals?

PFAS chemicals are not always listed under active ingredients so the best practice is to contact the manufacturer to check if PFAS is used in the foam. You can find the manufacturer information on the label or potentially on a safety data sheet.

# Firefighting Foams & Personal Protective Equipment Control Act

## What is the new law?

The first provision of the Firefighting Foams and Personal Protective Equipment Control Act, House Bill 19-1279, is effective August 2, 2019. The new law includes requirements designed to reduce environmental contamination and to reduce the risk of public health impacts for firefighters and Coloradans.

## What does the law say?

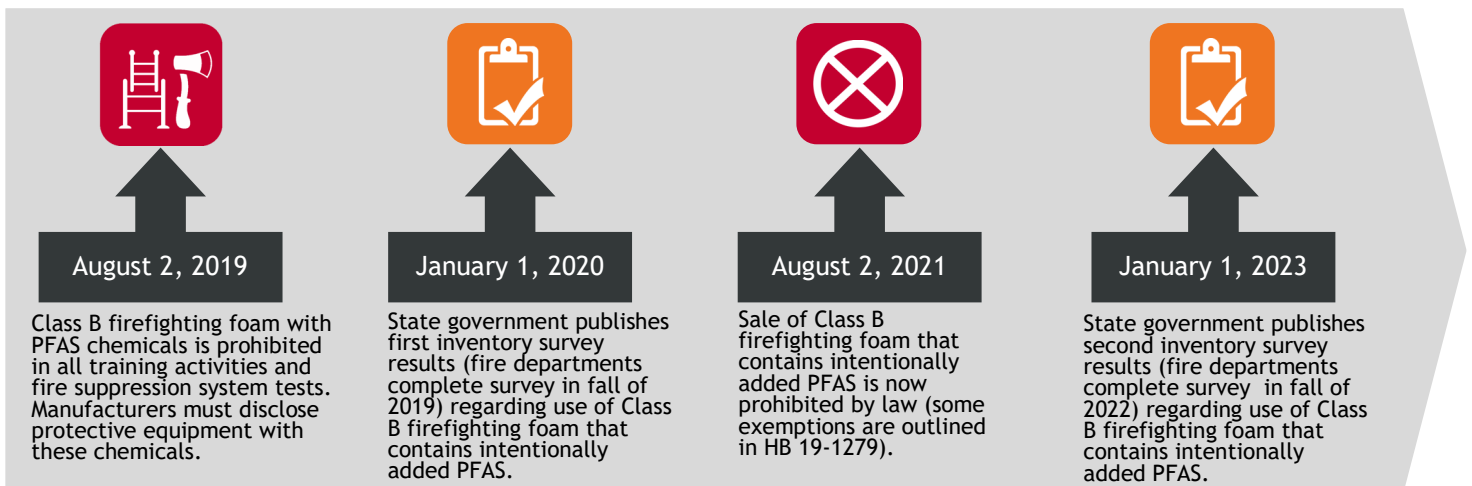
- Bans the use of Class B firefighting foam that contains PFAS chemicals for training or for testing systems that suppress fire.
- Bans the sale of Class B firefighting foam with PFAS chemicals (there are exemptions detailed in the bill).
- Requires manufacturers to notify businesses that sell firefighting foam containing PFAS about the sale restriction.
- Requires manufacturers/distributors of personal protective equipment to notify buyers if it contains PFAS chemicals.
- Requires the state to do a state-wide survey of fire departments inventory and use of firefighting foams with PFAS.



“The Department of Public Health and Environment understands and supports firefighters and the crucial role they play to protect lives and property while fighting fires. We want to work together to protect and keep people and the environment safe.”

**Jill Hunsaker Ryan**

Executive Director  
Colorado Department of  
Public Health and Environment



## Who needs to stop selling firefighting foams with PFAS?

Starting Aug. 2, 2021, manufacturers cannot sell foams with PFAS chemicals to anyone unless the buyer is exempt from the ban as outlined in HB19-1279.



## Who is exempt from the sale ban and why?

Some entities are authorized or required by federal law to have Class B firefighting foam that contains intentionally added PFAS due to explicit military, aviation, or industry standards. The law exempts other users as well. A list of these exemptions are outlined in HB19-1279. However, it is illegal for any entity to use foam with these chemicals for training activities or testing fire suppression systems.



## What is the survey?

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment will send out a survey to all fire departments in fall of 2019. This survey will help raise awareness and inform how the state can work with fire departments to reduce exposure to PFAS chemicals. Please fill out this survey, and help spread the word.



## What if you don't stop using the foam for testing and training?

Penalties may be imposed on entities that continue to use and release the banned foams for training events or testing fire suppression systems after Aug. 2, 2019. Users also risk future liability for contamination.



## Online resources

[www.colorado.gov/cdphe/pfcs](http://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/pfcs)