

New US standards to limit 'forever chemicals' in drinking water

March 14 2023



The US Environmental Protection Agency proposed new standards to limit levels of so-called 'forever chemicals' in public drinking water.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed new standards on Tuesday to limit levels of harmful so-called "forever

chemicals" in public drinking water.

The move targets polyfluoroalkyl and perfluoroalkyl substances known as PFAS that have been found to cause cancer and other [health problems](#)

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Under the proposed new EPA rules, public water utilities will be required to monitor for six PFAS chemicals and reduce PFAS levels in the water supply.

EPA administrator Michael Regan said the new water standards have the potential to prevent thousands of deaths and tens of thousands of PFAS-related illnesses.

PFAS have been used since the 1940s in a wide variety of industry and [consumer products](#) such as nonstick pans, carpeting, waterproof clothing, food packaging, cosmetics and cleaning items.

However, "what began as a so-called miracle, groundbreaking technology meant for practicality and convenience quickly devolved into one of the most pressing environmental and public health concerns in the modern world," Regan said.

"These [toxic chemicals](#) are so pervasive and so long-lasting in the environment that they've been found in food, soil and water even in the most remote corners of our planet," he said.

"These chemicals can accumulate in the body over time and we know that long-term exposure to certain types of PFAS has been linked to serious illnesses, including cancer, [liver damage](#) and high cholesterol," he added.

A number of major US corporations have been phasing out the use of

certain PFAS chemicals in recent years and some states have already imposed limits on PFAS in public drinking water.

The EPA proposal, which will be finalized by the end of the year, would set [national standards](#) for PFAS in drinking water.

The non-profit Environmental Working Group welcomed the EPA announcement as "historic progress" and the environmental law firm Earthjustice called it a "necessary and long overdue step towards addressing the nation's PFAS crisis."

"More than 200 million Americans could have PFAS in their tap water," said Scott Faber, [senior vice president](#) for government affairs at the Environmental Working Group.

"Americans have been drinking contaminated water for decades," Faber said. "This proposal is a critical step toward getting these toxic poisons out of our water."

President Joe Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed in 2021 invests \$9 billion over five years to help communities reduce PFAS contamination levels in drinking water.

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Citation: New US standards to limit 'forever chemicals' in drinking water (2023, March 14) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-03-standards-limit-chemicals.html>

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