

# PFAS and CASTINE

## **WHAT IS PFAS?**

There is a family of chemicals known as Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) now making news headlines. These are a group of human-made compounds that have been around since the 1940s. They have been used in various products including food packaging, stain resistant fabrics, non-stick cookware, water resistant clothing, microwave popcorn bags, and personal care products.

## **WHY DOES PFAS MATTER TO US?**

PFAS compounds do not easily breakdown where some types have been shown to accumulate in the environment and in our bodies. Exposure to some PFAS compounds has been linked to harmful health effects that include low infant birth weights, negative impacts on the immune system, some types of cancer, thyroid disruption, increased cholesterol levels, and interference with the body's natural hormone system.

PFAS compounds have been detected in soil, water, and air across the globe. PFAS has been found in consumable products including fish, deer, produce, and milk. The presence of PFAS in drinking water can potentially be an extra source of exposure.

## **PFAS AND THE CASTINE DRINKING WATER SUPPLY**

In the fall of 2021, the Castine Water Department tested the treated water at all four of our sources. All the samples were found to be free of PFAS compounds.

The State of Maine currently has an interim standard of 20 parts per trillion for the total of six PFAS compounds. There are currently no federal drinking water standards for PFAS though EPA is in the process of establishing them. The new federal standards are expected to become final by the end of 2023.

## **PFAS SAMPLING AT THE TOWN'S WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT**

In the fall of 2022, the Castine Wastewater Department started testing the influent and effluent of the wastewater treatment plant for PFAS as required by the Maine DEP. The treatment facility does little to reduce the levels of PFAS discharged into the Bay. The effluent from the facility has ranged between 23 to 50 parts per trillion for the total of the six PFAS compounds being evaluated in the discharge of the plant. There currently is not a standard for PFAS in the effluent of the treatment plant. This compares to a state wide average of approximately 57 parts per trillion. PFAS is also further concentrated in the biosolids that are processed at the plant and hauled to Casella Organics for disposal in a secure landfill.

## **STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR PFAS EXPOSURE**

Actions that people can take to reduce their potential exposure to PFAS include:

- Read the label! Avoid products with PTFE, "fluor" or "perfluor" as an ingredient
- Avoid using non-stick cookware
- Popcorn on the stove instead of using microwave bags
- Bring your own food in containers to avoid grease-resistant food wrappers from take-outs
- Use PFAS-free dental floss
- Avoid stain-resistant coating carpet and upholstery
- Choose PFAS-free clothing and try to avoid products with a Scotchgard or Gore-Tex coating



# Common household products known to contain PFAS

- Prepackaged food
- Insect-repellent chemicals
- Fabric softener
- Nail polish
- Eye makeup
- Moisturizers & hand creams
- Antiperspirant/deodorant
- Body wash/shampoo/conditioner
- Dental floss & plaque removers

- Non-stick cookware & containers
- Aluminum foil
- Wrinkle-free clothing
- Water-proof jackets
- Water-proof boots
- Stain-resistant carpeting
- Furniture fabric
- Plastic building materials
- Fast-food wrappers
- Pizza boxes