

Alice Springs Fire Station PFAS Investigation

Environmental officers from the Northern Territory Government recently undertook routine soil sampling at the Alice Springs Fire Station. This sampling showed levels of PFAS at the site that warrant further investigation.

As a result, the NT Government is commissioning a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) to be carried out by appropriately qualified experts. This is a precautionary approach to determine the nature and extent of PFAS at the site.

The identification of levels of PFAS in the soil at the Alice Springs Fire Station is very different to the circumstances in Katherine, where there was evidence of elevated PFAS levels in the water.

There are no detectable levels of PFAS in the Alice Springs town water supplied by Power and Water and the **water is safe to drink**.

Q. What is PFAS?

A. Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, also known as 'PFAS', are a group of manufactured chemicals that have been used since the 1950s in a range of common household products and specialty applications, including in the manufacture of non-stick cookware; fabric, furniture and carpet stain protection applications; food packaging; some industrial processes; and in some types of fire-fighting foams.

As a consequence of the broad usage, most people living in Australia will have detectable levels of PFAS in their blood. PFAS chemicals were historically used in firefighting foams because of their superior fire suppression capabilities. However, the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service moved away from using firefighting foams containing PFAS over a decade ago.

Q. Why is PFAS no longer used by NTFRS?

A. The NTFRS stopped using firefighting foams containing PFAS because the chemical is bio persistent, which means it can build up and can reside in pathways such as soil, water, plants and fruits, animals and animal products for a long time.

Q. What is happening at the Alice Springs Fire Station?

A. Recent soil sampling undertaken at the Alice Springs Fire Station by environment officers from the Northern Territory Environmental Protection Agency has showed levels of PFAS at the site that warrant further investigation.

Based on the levels of PFAS the Northern Territory Government is commissioning a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) to be carried out by appropriately qualified experts. This precautionary approach is being taken by the Northern Territory Government in keeping with the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan to determine the nature and extent of PFAS at the site.

Q. What does this mean for me?

A. Soil at nearby residential properties may need to be tested, and representatives from the Northern Territory Government and the appointed experts will be in touch with any affected residents prior to any sampling.

While the levels of PFAS at the Alice Springs Fire Station warrant further investigation, there is no immediate public health risk or cause for concern from nearby residents.

This does not affect the Alice Springs drinking water. Power and Water Corporation regularly tests Alice Springs' drinking water, and has most recently conducted tests last week. These tests have confirmed there are no detected levels of PFAS in Alice Springs' drinking water and that it is safe to drink.

There is no conclusive evidence that PFAS causes any adverse health outcomes. However, as a precaution the Australian Government's Environmental Health Standing Committee recommends exposure to PFAS be minimised wherever possible whilst further research is undertaken on the potential health effects.

Q. Do I need to do anything?

A. For most residents the answer is no. However, if you have any of the following we would like to hear from you.

Do you:

- Have a bore on your property?
- Raise chickens for meat or eggs on your property?
- Grow fruit or vegetables in the ground soil on your property?

If you answer yes to any of the above please get in touch via the below contact details as a follow up may be required.

More information:

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

CONTACTS:

Phone: 8999 4051

Email: pfas.taskforce@nt.gov.au