EPA Issues Significantly Lower Lifetime Health Advisory for PFOS and PFOA in Drinking Water

Site-specific Values Based On Realistic Exposure Assumptions May Lower Your Financial Risk

In May 2016, USEPA’s Office of Water issued lifetime, drinking water Health Advisories (HAs) for perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). These HAs replace provisional HAs issued in 2009 for these perfluorocarbons and are significantly lower as reflected below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>2009 Provisional Health Advisory</th>
<th>2016 Health Advisory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PFOS</td>
<td>0.2 µg/l</td>
<td>0.070 µg/l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFOA</td>
<td>0.4 µg/l</td>
<td>0.070 µg/l</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The USEPA further recommended comparing the sum of the PFOS and PFOA concentrations to the HA value when both are found together. It is important to understand the basis and context of this advisory, since misapplication could put you at unnecessary financial risk. These HAs are:

- Not enforceable standards – they are non-regulatory values provided to drinking water system operators and state, tribal, and local officials who have the primary responsibility for overseeing these systems.
- Derived to provide a margin of protection even for the most sensitive populations. In the case of PFOS and PFOA, this is the developing fetus and breast-feeding infant.
- Conservatively set at one-fifth of the allowable daily exposure in the event that exposure occurs via other pathways, such as food, dust, and soil.

Site-specific values that take into account more realistic exposures may be higher than 0.070 µg/l. It is also important to consider that:

- These compounds are part of a much larger class of Poly-and Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) that could also be present and present additional risks.
- The low HAs could approach background concentrations in some areas.
- The laboratory detection limits could be higher than the HA in some cases.
- The low HAs make it imperative to follow extraordinary sampling procedures and to avoid using equipment/materials that contain PFASs.

AECOM recommends that our clients consider a site-specific evaluation to identify appropriate potential risks. AECOM has conducted >150 PFAS projects, numerous PFAS risk assessments, and has developed an extensive array of PFAS sampling procedures to ensure data quality and integrity.