

Interim position statement on PFAS



Environment
Protection
Authority Victoria



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* This replaces 1669.3 issued October 2019

This position statement summarises information about Environment Protection Authority Victoria's (EPA) position on per- and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) and PFAS management. Detailed information about PFAS in Victoria is available on [EPA's website](#), including PFAS and health, PFAS in the environment and PFAS management.

PFAS are a large group of manufactured chemicals that have been used in firefighting foams and other industrial and consumer products for many decades. There are over 4000 individual PFAS substances; the two most well-known are PFOS (perfluorooctane sulphonate) and PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid), with increasing information being generated on PFHxS (perfluorohexane sulphonate).

Victoria's environment protection laws are intended to change in July 2021, with the implementation of a general environmental duty (GED) requiring anyone conducting an activity that poses risks to human health and the environment to minimise those risks, so far as reasonably practicable. This interim position statement informs how EPA expects people to act to comply with current and future legislation. Further information about these changes can be found on the [EPA website](#).

EPA's position on PFAS

EPA takes a precautionary approach to PFAS as they are persistent, accumulative and mobile. All of us are exposed to small amounts of PFAS in everyday life. A precautionary approach means reducing exposure to PFAS wherever possible.

EPA's position on PFAS reflects the most up-to-date information from the 2019 [Australian Government's Environmental Health Standing Committee \(enHealth\) Guidance Statement](#). It recommends reducing exposure to PFAS as far as is practicable. EPA's position is also supported by additional assessments of emerging chemicals in the [environment](#) and [biota](#) by EPA throughout Victoria.

EPA continues to assess emerging chemicals in the environment and biota, including PFAS, to make informed decisions about exposure and risk, and provide regular updates to all Victorians via the EPA website.

EPA's position on PFAS management

EPA uses its statutory powers under the [Environment Protection Act 1970](#) to hold polluters and landholders to account, issuing remedial notices requiring sites to be investigated and cleaned up. It is EPA's role to investigate potential environmental contamination from substances, including PFAS.

When EPA does not have regulatory authority, EPA will take all regulatory actions available within its powers to manage those impacts effectively. EPA will work collaboratively with other relevant jurisdictions and agencies to address the source(s) of PFAS contamination and any offsite pollution impacts.

Australia's Environment Ministers have endorsed Australia's first [PFAS National Environmental Management Plan](#) (NEMP). An adaptive plan, the PFAS NEMP provides Australia's state and territory governments with a consistent, practical, risk-based framework for the environmental regulation of PFAS-contaminated materials and sites. An updated version of the NEMP ([PFAS NEMP 2.0](#)) is under consideration by all Australian jurisdictions. EPA supports and has adopted the PFAS NEMP.

Landfill leachate discharge to sewer

EPA's position is that leachate discharges to sewer (including trade waste) should not be generally restricted on the basis of PFAS content. Landfill sites and the water treatment industry should be vigilant and work collaboratively to identify where specific sites warrant further consideration, such as when a site's leachate has unusually elevated concentrations of PFAS and discharges a high volume of this leachate to sewer.

Interim criteria for reuse of PFAS-impacted soil

EPA seeks to minimise PFAS in the environment wherever possible in accordance with the PFAS NEMP. More information on the classification of wastes impacted by PFAS to land can be found in the PFAS NEMP. EPA has adopted an interim criterion for the reuse of soil which may contain PFAS based on a limit of reporting (LOR) of 0.004 mg/kg (4 µg/kg), broken down as follows:

- PFOS <0.002 mg/kg
- PFHxS <0.001 mg/kg
- PFOA <0.001 mg/kg

This approach to PFAS-impacted soil for reuse is conservative based on current understanding of science and risk. These interim values are adopted until such time that further work may support revisions.

