CITY OF LANCASTER

Lancaster City Water

Dear Lancaster City Water Customer,

Enclosed you will find a letter notifying you of elevated levels of perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), known as forever chemicals, in drinking water sourced from the Conestoga River. This letter is prescribed by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). We want to ensure our customers understand in plain language the current situation around PFAS.

PFAS are a class of manufactured chemicals used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s. Today, you might find them in products you have in your home – waterproof fabrics, nonstick cookware, and dental floss. They are everywhere, including our water, air, and soil. This is not new. What is new is that DEP established standards for acceptable levels of two types of PFAS in drinking water: 14 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and 18 ppt for PFOS. The running annual average of our test results must be below these limits.

For context, a part per trillion is akin to a single drop of water in 20 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Thus, having a larger body of water to draw from helps dilute pollutants and helps water systems like ours stay below legal limits. This is why PFAS does not impact the two-thirds of our system sourced from the Susquehanna River, which is much bigger than the Conestoga River, which serves the other third.

Our region has experienced drought conditions over the last several months. During our test in July, water levels in the Conestoga River were low, increasing the concentration of PFOA. The abnormally high PFOA result in the Conestoga River took our running annual average over DEP's limit and triggered the enclosed letter. (The DEP requires the letter to go to all customers, not just those who get water from the Conestoga River.)

What is the City doing about this problem?
The City has explored solutions, and the most likely one so far involves sourcing water solely from the Susquehanna. Sounds easy enough, but it will cost about $90M — an enormous price tag to address a contaminant that is everywhere. An alternative is to reduce PFAS in the Conestoga River in the first place. We hope DEP will help identify where this stuff is coming from (hint: it's upstream!). The elevated levels of PFAS in the Conestoga River present a big challenge to the City: produce safe and regulation-compliant drinking water while keeping water rates affordable.

What should you do?
Read up on guidance from the US EPA on steps you can take to reduce your risk of PFAS exposure at www.epa.gov. According to the EPA, drinking water accounts for only 20% of PFAS exposure. The City also has information and test results posted at water.cityoflancasterpa.gov. If you're thinking of an alternative, note that bottled water is not as strictly regulated as drinking water and is not guaranteed to be free of PFAS.

Removing the sources impacting the Conestoga River and restricting the production of PFAS more broadly would go a long way to reducing these forever chemicals. Until then, the City and the 22 other regulated drinking water providers impacted by PFAS in Lancaster County, serving nearly half the county's population, will continue to fight an uphill — and upstream — battle.

Sincerely,

Jaime Arroyo
Mayor

Stephen Campbell
Director of Public Works

Christine Volkay-Hilditch
Deputy Director of Public Works, Utilities

To receive free interpretation services for this letter in another language, please email citylanguageaccess@cityoflancasterpa.gov or call 717-517-5738.

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pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BUREAU OF SAFE DRINKING WATER

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

PERFLUOROOCTANE SULFONATE (PFOS) / PERFLUOROOCTANOIC ACID (PFOA) MAXIMUM CONTAMINANT LEVEL (MCL) EXCEEDANCE

City of Lancaster Has Levels of PFOA Above Drinking Water Standards

Our water system recently violated a drinking water standard. Although this incident was not an emergency, as our customers you have a right to know what happened and what we did to correct this situation.

The City of Lancaster routinely tests drinking water for numerous contaminants. Results received on July 16, 2026, for the Conestoga Treatment Plant show a **PFOA** level of 18.4 ng/L, which is above the drinking water MCL. Compliance with drinking water regulations is based on the long running annual average of the four most recent quarters of test results, and the current **PFOA** average stands at 15.2 ng/L, exceeding the MCL of 14 ng/L.

What should I do?
You do not need to use an alternative (e.g., bottled) water supply. However, if you have specific health concerns, please consult your doctor.

What does this mean?
This is not an immediate risk. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately. However, exposure to PFOS and/or PFOA in excess of the MCL over many years may result in adverse health effects. Drinking water containing PFOA in excess of the MCL of 14 ng/L may cause adverse health effects, including developmental effects (neurobehavioral and skeletal effects).

What are PFOS and PFOA?
PFOS and PFOA are chemicals that are part of a larger group referred to as perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). These are human-made chemicals and do not occur naturally in the environment. They have been used to make items that are resistant to water, grease, or stains such as cookware, carpets, and packaging. They are also used in industrial processes and in firefighting foams. Since these substances are resistant to heat, water, and oil they persist in the environment and in the human body. Due to the prevalence of PFAS in consumer products, it is likely that most people have been exposed to these substances through other sources besides drinking water. In the EPA's technical fact sheet " Drinking Water Health Advisories for Four PFAS (PFOA, PFOS, GenX chemicals, and PFBS", the EPA reports the interim HAs (health advisories) for PFOA and PFOS using an RSC (relative source contribution) of 0.20, meaning that 20% of the exposure – equal to the RfD (chronic reference dose) – is allocated to drinking water, and the remaining 80% is attributed to all other potential exposure sources.[1]

What happened? What was done?
The third quarter PFOA sample for finished water from the City‘s Conestoga Treatment Plant had a result of 18.4 ng/l. This quarterly sampling reading results in the City’s Running Annual Average for PFOA being 15.2 ng/l, which is above the DEP’s PFOA MCL of 14 ng/l. The MCL exceedance for PFOA is only for finished water from the Conestoga Treatment Plant. PFOA is present in the Conestoga River. Finished water from the Susquehanna Treatment Plant is below the drinking water MCL for all PFAS compounds. The City is conducting appropriate sampling in accordance with DEP guidelines to evaluate the elevated levels of PFOA in the Conestoga River and to evaluate new treatment technology at the Conestoga Treatment Plant or a new water source.

For more information, please call the Water Quality Laboratory of the City of Lancaster at 717-291-4818.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by the City of Lancaster.

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[1] U.S. EPA, 2022a, b; U.S. EPA, 2000. Available here: https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-06/technical-factsheet-four-PFAS.pdf.