



*City Manager's Office*

Cedar Springs City Hall  
66 S. Main St. PO Box 310  
Cedar Springs, MI 49319

04-26-2021

RE: PFAS and PFOA testing  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Statement on the presence of Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in and around the City's wastewater/sewer systems**

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that includes PFOA, PFOS, GenX, and many other chemicals. Two of the most common PFAS chemicals are known as "PFOA" and "PFOS." PFAS chemicals have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe, including in the United States since the 1940s. PFAS chemicals are no longer manufactured in the United States but are still being imported into the United States from foreign countries. PFAS chemicals are still being used and can be found in food packaging, certain commercial household products such as nonstick products or cleaning products, and in some industrial workplaces such as chrome plating and electronics manufacturing. PFAS can also be found in water and soil that have been contaminated through various means. PFAS is a persistent chemical in the environment that is very difficult to breakdown and it accumulates over time. There is evidence that exposure to PFAS and the accumulation of PFAS in the human body can lead to adverse health outcomes in humans. (*Basic Information on PFAS, 2021*)

As an emerging problem, the potential health problems associated with PFAS and the laws that address PFAS are continuously being investigated, reviewed and changed as new information becomes available. Since at least 2016, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency has had a health advisory for PFAS chemicals at a combined concentration of PFOA and PFOS of 70 parts per trillion. The EPA stated that this 70 parts per trillion level offers a margin of protection for all Americans from adverse health effects from exposure to PFOA and PFOS. (*Fact Sheet PFOA and PFOS Drinking Water Health Advisories, 2021*)

The State of Michigan used the EPA's 70 parts per trillion limitation until August, 2020 when a new Michigan PFAS rule took effect changing the maximum contaminant level from 70 parts per trillion of combined PFOA and PFOS to a maximum of 16 parts per trillion of PFOS or a maximum of 8 parts per trillion for PFOA. (*EGLE Media Office, 2021*)

In 2017 and again in 2018, the City of Cedar Springs undertook PFAS testing on its municipal water supply and testing found that the City's water supply was "non-detect" for both PFOA and PFOS. (*City of Cedar Springs, 2018*) This testing helps City residents be sure that the City water that comes out of the tap in their homes has no PFOA or PFOS in the water. Subsequent to testing of the City's municipal water supply, the City began working with the Michigan Department of Environment,

Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE)(formerly known as MDEQ) to test the City's current and former wastewater treatment locations for PFAS chemicals. Initial testing found that there were PFOA detections of between non-detection and 43 parts per trillion at those testing locations. (*Kris Brooks Eurofins TestAmerica, 02-10-2020*) At the time of that testing, all of those findings were below the 70 parts per trillion limitations imposed by both the Federal EPA and also the State MDEQ/EGLE. In August of 2020, the State of Michigan changed the permitted PFOA levels down to 8 parts per trillion, causing some of the City's current and former wastewater treatment locations to potentially be in violation of the newly lowered limitations. Subsequent testing at some of those locations found their PFOA numbers to be reduced, including some reduced below the lowered State of Michigan limitations. (*Kris Brooks Eurofins TestAmerica, 12-21-2020*)

At this time, the City is working with EGLE to determine the nature, cause and potential extent of PFAS chemicals in the City's former and current wastewater systems. The City and EGLE are investigating two locations as possible locations of PFAS contamination, one is commonly referred to as the "Lagoon site" and is located in the southwest corner of the City. The second location being investigated is commonly referred to as the "discharge site" and it is located south of Indian Lakes road in Algoma Township.

The Lagoon site is the former location of the clean-water discharge from the City's wastewater system. The Lagoon site was constructed in 1965 and was used to help clean and infiltrate waste water before being released back into nature as clean water. The Lagoon system was removed from service in 1999 after all wastewater treatment was taken over by the City's wastewater treatment plant. The construction and operation of the Lagoon site, the monitoring and testing of the Lagoon site during operations, the closure of the Lagoon site and the monitoring and testing of the Lagoon site after closure has all been done in accordance with MDEQ/EGLE rules and has been approved of by the MDEQ/EGLE following all rules promulgated by the MDEQ/EGLE and the State of Michigan.

The "discharge site" is the current location that water from the City's wastewater treatment plant is released back into nature after that water is cleaned, it is located approximately 1 mile south of the City. The construction and opening of the wastewater treatment plant, the operations and testing of the wastewater treatment plant and the operations and testing of the wastewater plant's discharge location have all been done in accordance with MDEQ/EGLE rules and are all approved of by the MDEQ/EGLE following rules promulgated by the MDEQ/EGLE and the State of Michigan.

Both the Lagoon site and the discharge site have been used by dozens of businesses and hundreds of residential homes since 1965. Since these locations are the end location for the City's wastewater/sewer system, the presence of any PFAS chemicals at these sites are potentially the result of one or more of the City's sewer system's users depositing PFAS chemicals into the sewer system at some point since 1965. It is also possible that PFAS chemicals were present at either or both of these locations prior to 1965 or that the PFAS chemicals have been transported to these sites from unknown off-site locations. Since testing is ongoing and the potential timeframe for contamination is so long, nobody is currently aware of the origination of the PFAS chemicals at these two locations.

As the City of Cedar Springs and EGLE work to determine the nature, cause and potential extent of PFAS chemicals in and around these two locations, it is important to recognize that City-

water users are not in danger of any type of PFAS exposure from their water supply at this time. (*City of Cedar Springs, 2018*) There might be groundwater-well users in or around the southwest part of the City that have the potential of being exposed to PFAS chemicals from their groundwater supply. The most recent testing available indicates that the discharge site location in Algoma Township is below current PFAS limitations. Property owners in both of those locations are encouraged to test their own ground water supply for PFAS chemicals on their own or if they receive a letter from the City of Cedar Springs, to participate in the City's water testing program.

Under EGLE and Michigan rules and laws, the City (and hence its citizens and property owners), as owner and operator of the Lagoon site and discharge site, may be responsible for current, future or ongoing cleanup and/or monitoring activities related to contamination found at those locations. Those potential cleanups and/or monitoring activities which EGLE may mandate, have the potential to be prohibitively expensive and might also require significant new ongoing costs indefinitely into the future. At the time of this writing, there is no funding that the City is aware of to help pay for these mandates from EGLE or the State of Michigan. The lack of funding for these new EGLE and State of Michigan mandates means that the full cost of any cleanup or monitoring is likely to fall onto the shoulders of City of Cedar Springs citizens and property owners through increased utility rates or taxes.

The City of Cedar Springs is very concerned with the health and well-being of all citizens, both inside and outside of the City of Cedar Springs, and continuously works to protect the health and well-being of all citizens. The Cedar Springs government is actively investigating this PFAS situation and will proceed forward in its commitment to protect the health and well-being of all citizens in such a way as to best represent the interests of the citizens and property owners of the City of Cedar Springs.

Sincerely,



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## References

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