



# PFAS & Biosolids Frequently Asked Questions

## What are PFAS?



Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large, complex group of manufactured chemicals that are ingredients in various everyday products. These chemicals do not degrade easily in the environment because of their chemical makeup.

## Where do PFAS come from, and where are they found?



Produced for their water- and oil-resistant qualities, PFAS have been used for over 80 years in a wide variety of products like firefighting chemicals, fabrics, and cookware, and are found in virtually every home in the country.



Common interactions with PFAS include drinking contaminated water; eating food grown or raised near places that used or made PFAS; eating food packaged in materials that contain PFAS and using consumer products treated with PFAS.



The two most concerning compounds, PFOS and PFOA, are no longer produced in the United States, but are still imported and used in a variety of products. More recently developed forms of PFAS generally do not persist in the environment and human body for as long as PFOS and PFOA.



Wastewater treatment plants do not create PFAS. Rather, PFAS enter wastewater and flow into plants from various sources such as manufacturing and everyday activities. Wastewater and biosolids created by utilities contain trace amounts of PFAS resulting from the widespread use of PFAS prior to arriving at the plants.

## What are wastewater treatment plants doing to help prevent contamination?



Wastewater treatment plants across Minnesota are conducting voluntary testing, working with state and federal regulators to develop source reduction measures, and collaborating with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to ensure that regulators continue to make informed decisions that protect public health.



Source reduction is the most effective way to protect the state's waters from PFAS. There is currently a deficit of effective technology and funding for the complex and expensive PFAS treatment technology necessary to eliminate PFAS at wastewater treatment plants. Wastewater treatment plants are on the forefront of PFAS source reduction strategies and continue to advocate for placing the responsibility and cost on the original source rather than on downstream residents.

## What are biosolids?



Biosolids begin as human waste. Scientists developed a wastewater treatment process that turns what is flushed into valuable nutrients and renewable energy. This is a safe, inexpensive way to keep utility bills low, improve our environment, and provide farmers with better soil.

## Are biosolids safe?



Yes! Biosolids have been scientifically proven safe for land application and as a renewable energy source. Utilities across the country have safely made biosolids for decades.



Exposure to PFAS from biosolids is unlikely and minimal. Though it continues to be an area of active study, risk assessments and other studies from around the country have determined that contacts with biosolids pose no more of a health risk than from typical household products.



Biosolids that will be applied to land must meet strict regulations and quality standards. State and federal rules govern the use and disposal of biosolids, set limits for contaminants, and require record keeping and reporting.

## Who do I contact with questions or if I need help?



MPCA: Municipal Wastewater Technical Assistance Unit Supervisor Sheryl Bock at [sheryl.bock@state.mn.us](mailto:sheryl.bock@state.mn.us)

