



## UF researchers to study PFAS' effect on humans

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While many Americans aren't familiar with PFAS, this group of manufactured chemicals not only surrounds us but can be found in nearly everyone's blood, a risk federal regulators want to understand better.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced earlier this year that studying these chemicals, called per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, is one of its main commitments. And a researcher from the University of Florida was chosen to head one of the efforts to understand the synthetic chemical's impact.

Timothy Townsend, a UF environmental engineering professor, is spearheading a 3-year project to study what happens when PFAS enters a solid waste stream and a landfill.

Townsend is joined by researchers from UF and beyond, including Helena Solo-Gabriele from the College of Engineering at the University of Miami, John Bowden from the College of Veterinary Medicine at UF and Katherine Deliz Quiñones from the Department of Environmental Engineering Sciences at UF.

The group was parceled \$989,668 of a \$6 million federal grant to study PFAS. Seven other groups also were funded.

Townsend said the chemicals are present everywhere, including our clothes and shoes, food packaging products and firefighting foams. PFAS have existed for decades, he said, but only recently has the public begun to realize its potential health and environmental impact.

"There is so little data on these chemicals," he said. "They're in the products we wear, but where is the research on the fate of these?"

The public's alarm over the health and environmental risks from PFAS propelled the EPA to launch a two-year plan to study the chemical risks and reduce humans' exposure to them.

"Taking action to address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is a top priority for the Administrator, EPA leadership and the entire agency," said Dawn Harris-Young, spokeswoman for the EPA's Southeast office.

Though certain PFAS are no longer made in the United States, the products are produced around the world and imported.

Townsend said the goal of the study is to learn more about the chemicals and their role in landfills, knowledge that could inform lawmakers, scientists and landfill operators alike.