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HORSHAM WATER AND
SEWER AUTHORITY

PFAS grant window for area businesses closes Sept. 1

By Chris Ullery

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The application window remains open this month for the grant program open to water providers in communities dealing with ongoing PFAS remediation costs

A grant program diverting state tax dollars to help water clean-up efforts in Horsham, Warminster and Warrington will take applications from water providers through August.

The grant program is available to water providers in areas contaminated with the unregulated chemicals known as PFAS from the use of firefighting foams at nearby military bases.

State Rep. Todd Stephens, R-151, of Horsham, announced Monday afternoon nearly 40 of 112 eligible businesses and organizations in the area have applied for grants through a locally administered program through the Military Installation Remediation and Infrastructure Authority.

“These businesses deserve our thanks for taking the time to gather the appropriate tax information and submit it to the Department of Revenue to help fund our PFAS cleanup efforts,” Stephens said in a news release.

“For those eligible businesses who have not yet filed, I hope they’ll file as soon as possible to we don’t risk losing out on that revenue,” added Stephens.

The authority was created through a bill Stephens introduced near the end of last year, Act 101 of 2019, to help ease the upfront PFAS water remediation efforts that rate payers are currently paying for.

A lifetime health advisory limit of 70 parts per trillion for PFAS was established by the Environmental Protection Agency in May 2016, leading to dozens of public drinking water wells being taken offline.

Decades of use of firefighting foams containing the chemicals at former and active military bases in the area are believed to be the source of contamination reaching several hundred parts per trillion in some wells.

Local, state and federal officials have been working toward a settlement with the military to ultimately pay for remediation efforts, but residents have been paying the upfront costs for years.

Those costs usually take the form of higher water rates as area water providers worked to provide water with no detectable levels of the PFAS.

The grant money can also be used to cover other costs like installing new filtration systems and connection costs from public well owners who had to connect to public water supplies due to contamination.

A report presented to the authority on Aug. 7 indicated the eligible water providers are all in Horsham, near the former Willow Grove Naval Air Station.

The news release from Stephens' office says those businesses are being notified by mail and follow up phone calls and emails.

Eligible businesses must file by Sept. 1 so the state funds can remain local to eliminate the water surcharges added to remove PFAS from drinking water, to connect private well owners to PFAS free public water, and fund new filters in areas who don't yet have them.

"It takes a little bit of time (to apply), but we are prepared to help to make it as easy as possible," Stephens said Monday.

Eligible businesses that haven't applied for grants through the authority can call the authority's treasurer, Larry Burns at 215-643-3131.

A website with more information about the authority has been created through www.horsham.org.