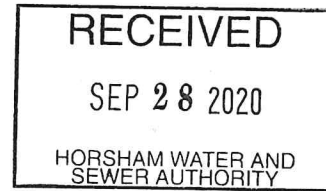


https://www.newburyportnews.com/news/regional_news/state-limits-forever-chemicals-in-drinking-water/article_0c97a1ce-aa77-5715-b16d-17e7f0cbf1d5.html

State limits 'forever chemicals' in drinking water

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BOSTON — Drinking water systems will be required to remove contamination from "forever chemicals" under new statewide rules that go into effect next month.

The regulations, finalized Thursday by the state Department of Environmental Protection, require public water systems to test for so-called PFAS compounds and remove the contamination if the concentrations of six chemicals test above 20 parts per trillion.

The move makes Massachusetts one of only a handful of states to regulate the chemicals, which were once used in everything from frying pans to firefighting foam.

DEP Commissioner Martin Suuberg said the rules will improve water safety by requiring regular monitoring of chemicals linked to cancer.

"Public water systems will be required to test for PFAS, and if they exceed a certain level, they will need to take action to bring those levels down below the regulatory level we've set," Suuberg told reporters. "The rules will also require transparency, and testing results will be reported publicly."

The compounds known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances have been dubbed "forever chemicals" because they accumulate in the human body and can take decades to degrade. Studies have found potential links between PFAS and kidney cancer, high cholesterol and problems in pregnancies.

Under the new rules, polluters must also clean up contaminated soil and groundwater if PFAS levels are shown to be above the new standards.

Water systems serving 50,000 or more people will begin testing in January under a state timeline. Those serving 10,000 to 50,000 people will begin testing in April, and those with fewer than 10,000 users will begin testing in October, officials said.

Brad Campbell, president of the Conservation Law Foundation, called the new standards a "major advance in safeguarding our water from toxic PFAS."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was supposed to roll out plans to regulate PFAS by 2019 but missed its own self-imposed deadline.

Legislation approved by the U.S. House of Representatives in January would limit the production of new PFAS chemicals, require the cleanup of contaminated sites, set air emission standards and establish nationwide standards. President Donald Trump has vowed to veto the proposal if it reaches his desk.

In July, New Hampshire implemented even more aggressive limits on four PFAS chemicals, ranging from 12 to 18 parts per trillion.

Earlier this year, a judge granted a request by 3M and other chemical companies blocking New Hampshire's standards, but the injunction was recently lifted.

"Both Massachusetts and New Hampshire are heading in the same direction," Suuberg said Thursday when asked why the state did not pursue the same limits as New Hampshire. "We're looking at the latest public health information and toxicology data and setting aggressive limits."

Christian M. Wade covers the Massachusetts Statehouse for North of Boston Media Group's newspapers and websites.