

Sampling by Government of PFAS in private water supplies

Introduction- PFAS and its distribution in Jersey

PFAS chemicals are highly complex and extremely long lasting in the environment. They have been termed as the 'forever chemicals'. Scientific understanding of the behaviour and toxicity of these chemicals is rapidly developing amidst global concern.

There are hundreds of PFAS chemicals that have derived from a multitude of uses, principally as a water and oil proofing agent that cover a large array of products in daily use (from pizza boxes to waterproofing materials).

In Jersey, PFAS (mainly PFOS and PFOA) was historically used in fire-fighting foam, principally at the airport. The use stopped in the 1990s. This has left a legacy in groundwater that extends westwards from the airport fire-training ground down into the aquifer in St Ouen's Bay. A further area extends south of the airport into the Pont Marquet water catchment.

Background levels of PFAS have been recorded throughout the Island, as common with many other countries, and as a consequence to its wide use described above.

Current work and sampling

The Minister for the Environment established a Technical Officer Group to coordinate the PFAS work in Jersey. The Technical Officer Group publishes annual update reports and recommendations, including results from sampling.

Several of the recommendations relate to undertaking a hydrogeological survey of the St Ouen's Bay and Pont Marquet catchments. Government Plan funding has been secured and the appointment of consultants to undertake the work is being progressed. Phase 1 of the survey will likely involve further sampling of streams and groundwater (boreholes and wells).

Further recommendations include establishing a procedure whereby private households/landlords are able to test their private water supplies. Due to the technical sampling procedures this needs to be done by experienced officers.

Due to the need for data by the Government as part of the general understanding and the hydrogeological survey mentioned above, the Minister for the Environment considers it practical to sample private water supplies and to fund/part-fund the analysis costs. This will be for households/landlords whose properties are connected to private water supplies (e.g. boreholes and wells) to supply drinking water, on the following conditions;

1. An application is made to the Environment Department by the household/landlord and that this is approved by the Technical Officer Group in advance of the sampling.
2. Repeat samples of the same source will not be undertaken, but maybe re-sampled according the need of the hydrogeological survey.
3. If approved, the sampling will include;
 - i. Sampling of PFOS/PFOA (two determinands) across the island.
 - ii. Sampling of the existing full PFAS suite (currently 16 determinands) suite providing the sampling point is within the St Ouen's Bay or Pont Marquet PFAS plumes¹.
 - iii. Households/landlords wanting the existing full PFAS suite (16 determinands) that are outside of the St Ouen's Bay or Pont Marquet PFAS plume area¹ will

¹ The position of the sampling point in relation to the PFAS plume is to be assessed by the Technical Officer Group.

be charged for the difference in cost of the PFOS/PFOA (two determinands) analysis and that of the full PFAS suite (currently 16 determinands).

Before making an application, households/landlords are advised to contact the Environmental Department (tel: 01534 441600) to see whether previous sampling undertaken by the Technical Officer Group covers the area and thus negates the need for sampling.

In agreeing to the sampling, households/landlords agree to share the results with the PFAS Technical Officer Group and allow re-sampling, if needed, as part of ongoing work. Publication of results by the Technical Officer Group will not include details of the property or household, so that the exact location cannot be identified.

In approving and sampling a private water supply, the Government accepts no responsibility or liability for any further action as might arise from the results of the analysis for PFAS chemicals.

This Ministerial Decision will be reviewed after one year from publication. The decision to extend this subsidy is dependent on the extent and coverage of ongoing data collection.

ⁱ The position of the sampling point in relation to the PFAS plume is to be assessed by the Technical Officer Group.