
FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Bulletin #29, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – PFAS Health Concerns, July 9, 2021

Active-Duty military firefighters can obtain a PFAS blood test panel only during their annual physical. Retired military firefighters have no option for a PFAS blood test through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). They can, however, obtain a PFAS blood test if they pay for it out-of-pocket.

“In the 1970s, the Department of Defense (DoD) began using [Aqueous Film-Forming Foams] AFFF to fight fuel fires. The release of these chemicals into the environment during training and emergency responses is a major source of PFAS contamination of ground water on military bases.

Concerns have recently been raised from communities surrounding bases about whether PFAS-contaminated ground water on military bases may be affecting off-base water supplies. The DoD is currently conducting an investigation into the extent of PFAS contamination on its bases and is taking several actions to protect against future exposure.”¹

The VA reports “if you are concerned about health problems associated with exposure to firefighting foam during your military service, you should talk to your health care provider or local VA Environmental Health Coordinator.”²

On firefighting foam exposures, there has not “been an official declaration or correlation by the government that exposure to firefighting foam can cause specific illnesses.”³

“However, the recent legislation and action by the DoD to end its use and clean up areas near many military installations is a step toward fixing a perceived problem. It took the government several years to take action on Agent Orange, burn pits and other hazards; it seems to be moving much more urgently in the case of firefighting foam contamination.”⁴

1 U.S. Department of Veterans, PFAS – Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/pfas.asp>

2 *ibid.*

3 Firefighting Foam in Water Near Bases Gets Congressional Attention, military.com, Jim Absher, 15 Jan 2020, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/01/15/firefighting-foam-water-near-bases-gets-congressional-attention.html>

4 *ibid.*



Photo by: Corey Dutton