
Bulletin #50, Airport Twists, February 11, 2022

The Department of Defense (DoD) estimates replacements for ARFF apparatus “may take over 18 years at current commercial production rates, assuming DoD could acquire 50 percent of current commercial production.”¹

“However, commercial airports in the United States employ a fleet of ARFF vehicles more than twice the size of DoD’s, which may impact availability and replacement timelines.”²

Since the FAA missed the congressional deadline of October 5, 2021 to transition to fluorine-free foams, new airport ARFFs have continued to be filled with fluorinated firefighting foams during the past three years. Each year this “miss” occurs will only prolong the PFAS contamination issues.

“More than 50 commercial airports in major cities around the world and several of the biggest companies in the oil and gas industry have ceased using fluorinated firefighting foam and opted for alternatives, according to IPEN.”³

“From a firefighter’s perspective, we know we have significantly raised PFAS levels in our blood,” said Commander Mick Tisbury, Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and United Firefighters Union (UFU), Australia. “We feel we have a ticking time-bomb in our bodies; we do not know when it will explode or even if it will explode - we just want the bomb removed!”⁴

Municipal and volunteer fire departments could just stop using AFFFs – how simple is that!? There are no regulations requiring fire departments to use AFFF.

Airports will still have to wait for the FAA who is dealing with the US Department of Transportation and Department of Defense. Anticipate mutual aid demand changes.

¹ Department of Defense Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Task Force, Progress Report, March 2020, https://media.defense.gov/2020/Mar/13/2002264440/-1/-1/1/PFAS_Task_Force_Progress_Report_March_2020.pdf

² *ibid.*

³ News11 Paper, What are PFAS, Dec 2, 2021, <https://factsandhistory.com/what-are-pfas/>

⁴ At UN meeting, governments agree to a global ban of PFOA – a toxic water pollutant, IPEN, 03 May 2019, <https://ipen.org/news/un-meeting-governments-agree-global-ban-pfoa-%E2%80%93-toxic-water-pollutant>

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