
FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Bulletin #16, Proper Disposal of AFFF Products, March 26, 2021

Fire departments do not want to be contaminating their own communities' water sources. The fire service is feeling public pressure to change over to fluorine-free firefighting foams. Fire chiefs are usually considered the first line risk manager but they have been unaware of the PFAS toxicity in Aqueous Film-Forming Foams (AFFF).

Now, fire departments are finding they need to properly dispose of fluorinated firefighting foam products: AFFF and AR-AFFF. Without guidance from the USEPA, states have been setting up their own procedures and guidance. Twenty-six states have now either passed or have proposed regulations on PFAS based AFFF.¹

When the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted a fire department survey on firefighting foams, they found: "Only 21 departments returned their fluorinated firefighting foam to the manufacturer or supplier, while nine sent it to a landfill."² More departments could consider returning product since AFFF products require special disposal.

Approximately half (51%) of the Wisconsin fire departments indicated that they currently had expired fluorinated firefighting foam on hand that needed to be disposed of.³

In the interim, the fire service could:

- Contact your local or state level Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) or DNR.
- Some states are setting up storage or "take-back" provisions.⁴
- Store fluorinated foams safely until they can be properly disposed.
- AFFF and AR-AFFF products should not be poured out onto the ground, sewer drains or water sources.

1 <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/pfas-regulation-of-firefighting-foam-21645/>

2 https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/PFAS/PFAS_FFFSurveyResults.pdf

3 *ibid.*

4 <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/pfas-regulation-of-firefighting-foam-21645/>



Photo by Maria Powell, Madison Environmental Justice Organization (MEJO)

In Madison, Wisconsin “Law Park stormwater outlet into Lake Monona in 2019, with yellow boom installed to prevent PFAS foam from spreading after the MGE fire.” [PFAS from 2019 MGE fire continues to ooze, drain, and slosh into Lake Monona, March 20, 2021, <https://mejo.us/pfas-from-2019-mge-fire-continues-to-ooze-drain-and-slosh-into-lake-monona/>]

PFAS containing firefighting foams were used in a downtown area during a transformer fire. Run-off from those foams flowed into storm drains which discharged directly into the lake. Booms are ineffective tools to utilize with fluorinated firefighting foams as the PFAS chemicals are distributed wherever water flows.

“Last year, DNR fish testing found up to 180,000 ppt PFOS in Lake Monona fish.” (Informational packet, January 15, 2020, <https://mejo.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2020.1.15.Starkweather-Fish-PFAS-testing.pdf>)