

Illinois EPA Files Administrative Rules To Create First Illinois Groundwater Quality Standards For PFAS Chemicals

December 19 2021 7:15 AM



SPRINGFIELD —Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Director John J. Kim announced the Agency has submitted amendments to 35 Illinois Administrative Code (Ill. Admin. Code) Part 620 to the Illinois Pollution Control Board (Board). The proposed amendments update toxicity data for various chemicals, update exposure factors, and introduce groundwater quality standards for five Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) chemicals.

The proposed rule includes new groundwater quality standards for five PFAS chemicals: perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS), and perfluorobutanesulfonic acid (PFBS). In addition, the proposal includes groundwater quality standards for nine new chemicals, three new atrazine metabolites, and procedures for selecting toxicity values consistent with current federal guidance among other updates.

PFAS are a group of approximately 5,000 human-made chemicals that are manufactured for their oil and water-resistant properties. Since the 1940s, PFAS have been used in a wide range of consumer products, industrial processes, and in some fire-fighting foams (called aqueous film-forming foam or AFFF). This has resulted in PFAS being released into the air, water, and soil.

“This regulatory submittal is the culmination of work by Illinois EPA staff over the past two years in an effort to establish Illinois’ first groundwater standards for PFAS chemicals,” said Director Kim. “These regulations are a significant step to regulating these forever chemicals that will allow Illinois to develop standards to more effectively protect the public and environment against adverse impacts associated with PFAS contamination.”

Groundwater in Illinois is important as drinking water for people and livestock, irrigation, industrial inputs, to sustain wetlands and other habitats, and to maintain flow and water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams. Groundwater quality standards help the Illinois EPA to protect current and future uses of groundwater by providing a measure of groundwater’s suitability for use and to set limits when remediation is necessary. Monitoring groundwater quality to detect changes in composition can provide an early warning when contaminants threaten water supplies and provide a measure for cleanup effectiveness when required.

Individuals and stakeholders can receive updates on the proposed rulemaking by signing-up for electronic notifications by the Board at <https://pcb.illinois.gov/Cases/GetCaseDetailsById?caseId=17099>.