

The Storage and Disposal of Class B Firefighting Foams

March 2022

Why we are contacting you

We are writing to tell you about important information that may affect your organisation if you use and store Class B firefighting foams.

Some foams contain persistent organic pollutants (POPs) that remain in the environment for very long periods of time. They are toxic and gradually build up to harmful levels in living organisms and present a risk to the environment and human health.

You must comply with the legal controls that apply to these foams.

What you need to do

You need to

- check if your foam contains POPs
- comply with the restrictions on use of the foam containing POPs
- dispose of foam containing POPs appropriately

Check if my foam contains persistent organic pollutants

To find out if the foam you hold contains the persistent organic pollutant Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), its salts and/or PFOA-related compounds, you can:

- Check the safety data sheet for the foam.
- Contact the supplier or manufacturer of the foam.
- Get the foam analysed by a suitable lab.

PFOA, its salts and PFOA related compounds have previously been used as active ingredients in Class B firefighting foams, particularly in aqueous film forming foams, due to their surfactant properties. They may also be present in foams, with other active ingredients, as a contaminant.

If you are unsure, and unable to find out, you should adopt a precautionary approach and assume the foam may contain these substances.

Comply with restrictions on use of the foam containing POPs

The law does not allow the use of substances, mixtures and articles containing PFOA, its salts and PFOA related compounds.

However, there is an exemption for the storage and use of fire-fighting foam for Class B fires already installed in systems, including both mobile and fixed systems provided that you meet the following conditions.

- Holders of foam stockpiles greater than 50kg must notify the environment agency by completing a [stockpile notification form](#) (webpage below) and sending to chemicalrestrictions@environment-agency.gov.uk. You must notify us as soon as possible if you hold a POPs stockpile.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88

- The fire-fighting foam shall not be used for training.
- The fire-fighting foam shall not be used for testing unless all releases are contained.
- As from 1 January 2023, the use of the fire-fighting foam shall only be allowed in sites where all releases can be contained.
- As from 4 July 2025, all uses are prohibited.

When PFOA fire-fighting foams reach the end of their life you can store them at the site of production for up to 12 months after which they must be disposed of appropriately.

Dispose of foam containing POPs appropriately

It is important that you manage waste foam appropriately.

You must not discharge unwanted PFOA fire-fighting foams to sewer. You may commit an offence if you do so. These chemicals may pass through the sewage works and contaminate the environment and drinking water. They may also contaminate sewage sludge used on agricultural land to produce our food.

You should ensure that your waste is taken to a hazardous waste incinerator to destroy these compounds.

You must ensure that

- any contractor you employ to remove the waste is registered as a waste carrier, and
- the waste transfer or consignment note clearly indicates the presence of the PFOA chemical present

For further information on your responsibilities see the [Duty of Care code of practice](#)

Further help

Further information on the use, storage, and disposal of POPs, including PFOA, can be found online at www.gov.uk by searching “persistent organic pollutants”.

The POPs stockpile notification form can be found online at www.gov.uk/government/publications/persistent-organic-pollutants-notifying-pops-stockpiles

We have provided supporting information from the UK POPs Regulation on the definition of substances referred to as “PFOA, its salts and PFOA related compounds” and the concentration limits for unintentional trace contamination with this communication.

We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at chemicalrestrictions@environment-agency.gov.uk.

For queries outside of England, please contact:

nationalwaste@sepa.org.uk for Scotland

chemicals@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk for Wales

NIEAChemicals@daera-ni.gov.uk for Northern Ireland

Who we are

We are the Environment Agency. We monitor and enforce controls on certain chemicals in England - to protect the environment and human health through exposure to the environment.

We are one of the enforcing authorities for the UK POPs Regulation, relating to controls on chemicals known as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

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