



Atlantic City Municipal Utilities Authority

DIRECTORS

MILTON L. SMITH, *Chairman*
GARY L. HILL, *Vice Chairman/Sec.*
JOHN J. McGETTIGAN, *Treasurer*
EDMUND J. COLANZI
WILLIAM LEA

G. BRUCE WARD, *Executive Director*
CLAUDE SMITH, *Deputy Executive Dir., of Engineering*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 25, 2019

* * * *

The Atlantic City Municipal Utilities Authority has initiated measures to achieve new water quality standards.

New Jersey has chosen to more stringently regulate a class of chemicals known as poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that have been linked to certain illnesses, to levels significantly lower than currently regulated by the federal government's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This is most likely attributed to growing national focus on risks to public health from chemicals in drinking water brought on largely by the Flint Michigan water crisis.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection ("NJDEP") recently adopted a plan to set a "maximum contaminant level" (MCL) for perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), used in consumer products such as nonstick cookware, flame-retardant foams and fabrics. Traces of these substances persist in many New Jersey water systems including the primary source for Atlantic City's drinking water. The Atlantic City Municipal Utility Authority ("ACMUA") has taken aggressive steps to remove these substances to achieve compliance with the new NJDEP Regulations.

In the early 1980's Atlantic City's groundwater sources were threatened by contamination migrating from an adjacent superfund classified cleanup site commonly known as Price's Pit. The decision at that time to relocate production wells to the FAA Technical Center was made by ACMUA staff with NJDEP approval. G. Bruce Ward, ACMUA's current Executive Director, stated, "While I'm not an Engineer, I can't imagine how the decision was made to move water wells for the purpose of avoiding contamination to an aviation test site. As long as I can remember, the FAA, formerly NAFEC, was setting planes on fire and testing retardants."

A recent engineering study by TRC Environmental Corp., concluded that significant PFAS chemicals have settled into groundwater and soil at the FAA Technical Center. Their study noted years of fire testing performed as early as the 1950's by various military units.

The migration of these substances into Atlantic City's water supply source raises a significant challenge for the ACMUA to adjust to meet the new NJDEP standard. Atlantic City water samples currently reveal that while PFNA is not detected, two other PFAS chemicals, perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), are above proposed limits and significant treatment changes must be made to achieve compliance.

Studies of the effects of PFAS chemicals on public health reveal effects in animals however, most cannot conclude levels of risk exposure to humans. Moreover, these substances remain in non-stick cook ware, stain resistant clothing, microwave popcorn and dental floss.

The ACMUA engaged an engineering firm to recommend what additional treatment solutions would be required to achieve compliance with the new DEP standards. Their review estimated costs to upgrade ACMUA's treatment processes will exceed twenty \$20 million on the front end with annual regeneration expenses of upwards of \$1.5 million.

Ward asserts these costs cannot be borne by the City's ratepayers and that responsible parties must be held accountable. A New Jersey law firm, DeCotiis Fitzpatrick has been engaged to assess liability of the FAA Technical Center. A nationally recognized Environmental Law firm, Sher Edling, will join to bring claims against PFAS chemical manufacturers. Other New Jersey water purveyors that are similarly situated will, like the ACMUA, be forced to pursue legal claims to cover the costs to retrofit their systems.

The ACMUA expects continued public and government concern over the quality of drinking water in New Jersey. Every effort to maintain the highest standards for Atlantic City's drinking water will remain paramount.

For further information

G. Bruce Ward, Esq.
Executive Director