

TREATING PFAS IN WASTEWATER

Poly/Perfluoroalkyl Substances

Why Bolton & Menk

- Assist clients in understanding PFAS testing results
- Help clients respond if PFAS are found in their community
- Develop long-term plan for PFAS
- Assist in developing PFAS source reduction plan
- Support with funding as it becomes available

What is it?

PFAS are man-made chemicals that are resistant to breakdown, giving them the label “forever chemicals.” PFAS are commonly found in non-stick cookware, water- and stain-resistant carpeting and fabrics, cosmetics, and firefighting foam. PFAS enter wastewater through both industrial and household sources such as metal finishing, landfill leachate, and human discharge.

Why You Should Care

Currently, there are no national or state regulations in place for PFAS contamination in wastewater systems; however, PFAS pose several potential health risks including liver and fertility issues, and increased cholesterol, blood pressure, and cancer risk.

Treating PFAS in Wastewater

When PFAS are in the liquid phase of wastewater, they are removed through reverse osmosis, granular activated carbon, and ion exchange, all of which require disposal of a secondary product and incur higher cost. When in the biosolids phase, dewatering, drying, and high temperature destruction (such as pyrolysis and gasification) have shown promising results in breaking down PFAS to less harmful constituents.

Pollution Prevention/Source Reduction

Wastewater treatment plants are not sources of PFAS; however, PFAS pass through these facilities in the discharge water and biosolids. Pollution prevention plans or PFAS source reduction plans prevent pollution at its source to avoid expensive treatment options. Reducing the PFAS source is the most economical method to reduce PFAS. Common sources of PFAS include airports, landfills, industrial sites, and military sites. Pollution control agencies across the United States have begun testing the wastewater influent for PFAS concentrations and setting aside funding for pollution prevention efforts to reduce PFAS.

