Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Spill Prevention and Response Division
Contaminated Sites Program

How to Test Your Water for PFAS

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If you are concerned about per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in your drinking water, this fact sheet offers step-by-step advice for choosing a lab and testing your water. However, before you invest your time and money, we recommend you contact the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Drinking Water Program at **https://dec.alaska.gov/eh/dw/contact/** to find out if testing is necessary.

Ordering a Sample Kit

- DEC has created a list of some analytical laboratories that offer PFAS drinking water testing: **http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/pfas/labs/**. The two recommended methods for testing your water are **Environmental Protection Agency** (**EPA) Method 537.1** or **EPA Method 533.**

- Choose the lab and method that works best for you: Because lab capabilities differ; we suggest asking multiple labs about their prices (including shipping AND return shipping) and reporting limits (smallest amount that the method will reliably measure) for both methods 533 and 537.1.
  Note: The current EPA Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) each in drinking water is 4.0 nanograms per liter (ng/L), also expressed as 4.0 parts per trillion (ppt).

- Request a sample kit for the method that you have chosen.

- The lab will ask you how many samples you want to take. If you have one well then tell them you want "one sample and one field blank." If you have a home with several different wells, call DEC first before you call the lab.

- Ask for five pairs of disposable gloves for collecting the sample.

- You will receive the sampling kit in the mail. Don't open the box or cooler until you're ready to do the testing to avoid any cross-contamination.

- If you have questions about selecting a lab or ordering a sample kit, you can contact **Zuzana Culakova, Chemist, DEC Contaminated Sites Program: 907-465-5346 or zuzana.culakova@alaska.gov**.

Sampling Preparation

- If your kit comes with PFAS-free gel ice, take it out of the sample kit and put it in your freezer for 24 hours before going on to the next step. If your kit didn't come with PFAS-free gel ice, then fill several Ziploc-type plastic bags with regular ice.

- Sampling is much easier to do with two people, so have someone help you, if possible. There are a lot of steps in this sampling – we recommend practicing this at least once

with glasses or jars of your own before doing it with the actual sample equipment. Decide when and where you are going to sample. It is best to sample water before it goes through any treatment or filtration system (like a water softener or a filter), if possible.

- Open the box carefully, so you can use the same box to mail the kit back to the lab.

- Remove the contents of the box or cooler. The sample kit should contain the following:

1. Four sample containers.
2. Sampling gloves. If the kit doesn't contain gloves you can usually find them at a local hardware store. You will want about **five pairs of non-powder nitrile (not latex)** gloves.
3. Two containers of "PFAS-free" water.
4. A temperature blank.
5. Chain of custody form.
6. Labels for the sample containers (or sample containers may be pre-labeled).
7. A chain of custody sticker for the outside of the cooler.

- Read the kit instructions carefully. If you have any questions, please call the lab or DEC at the number on the last page of this fact sheet.

- Do not apply lotion, makeup or other products directly before, or during, sampling.

- Wear clean clothes, and if possible, avoid wearing waterproof clothing including Gore-Tex clothing, or clothing with waterproofing or water-repellant treatments.

- Remove watches and jewelry to avoid tearing the gloves.

- Fill out the paperwork and labels using a ballpoint pen, fine or ultra-fine Sharpie ® marker. Note: some labs may send you pre-labeled bottles.

Sampling

Follow the kit instructions. Kits can vary from lab to lab. If you have questions, call the lab or DEC.

Notes: Do not touch sampling bottles with ungloved hands. Use fresh gloves for each step to prevent cross-contamination. Avoid contact between clothing and your gloves or sample bottles. When taking samples, do not touch the insides of the bottles or caps.

Unpack the cooler and label bottles:

1. Wash and dry your hands. Put on a pair of nitrile gloves.
2. Remove the bottles from the cooler and place the labels on the bottles. Do not open the bottles. If the bottles came in bags, label the bags like you labeled the bottles.
3. Place the bottles back in the cooler. Close the lid. Remove and throw away the disposable gloves.

Take Samples:

4. Take the kit to the sampling location. **Remember, it is best to sample water before it goes through any treatment system or filter. If you can't do that, use your kitchen or bathroom sink.**
5. Turn on the cold water (full speed) and allow it to run for about **3-5 minutes.**
6. Turn the cold water down to low to medium speed. Put **another** pair of disposable gloves on.

7. Open the lid of the sample bottle. **Keep the lid in your gloved hand, do not put it down.** There will be a white powder in the bottle. Don't dump out the powder, it is supposed to be there.
8. Fill the sample bottle to the fill line. If there is no fill line, fill the bottle up to the bottom of the neck. **Be careful to not let the water overflow.** Close the bottle.

9. Put the bottle in one of the bags provided in the sample kit.
10. Repeat steps 5 through 8 with second sample bottle. This provides a backup sample if one bottle breaks or is spilled during shipping.
11. Seal the bag and put it in the cooler. Throw away disposable gloves and shut off the water.

Prepare your field blank bottles:

12. Put on a new pair of disposable gloves. In the cooler should be a full bottle labeled "PFAS-free water" or "D.I. water." Leave the bottle in the cooler, but remove and discard the bottle lid. Open the lid of the bottle labeled "field blank." Have your partner hold the lid with gloves on or set it upside down somewhere clean.

13. Pick up the "PFAS-free water" bottle and pour the water into the "field blank" bottle. Fill the sample bottle to the fill line. If there is no fill line, fill the bottle up to the bottom of the neck. Be careful to not let the water overflow. Close the "field blank" bottle.

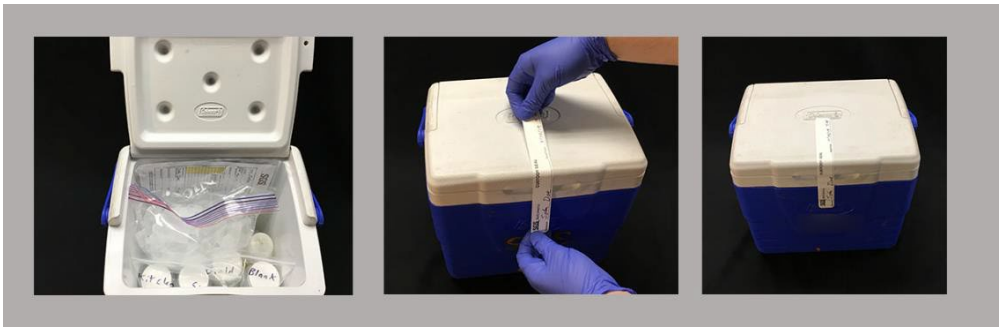
14. Discard the "PFAS-free water" bottle. Put the field blank bottle in one of the bags provided in the sample kit.

15. Repeat steps 11 through 13 with second sample bottle.

16. Seal the bag and put it in the cooler.

Sample Packaging and Shipment

- Put the temperature blank in the cooler. Now there should be **five** bottles total in the cooler. Make sure they are all upright.
- Put the ice in the cooler with the samples.
- Complete the paperwork, put it in a Ziploc-type bag, and put it in cooler.
- Close cooler lid and apply the chain-of-custody sticker.
- Put the cooler back in the original box if provided. Remove your last pair of disposable gloves and throw them away.



- Tape box, apply the shipping label and bring box to the specified shipper to be sent back to the lab. If the cooler did not come in a box, put the shipping information right on the cooler. Call the lab and tell them that you have mailed the package.

This is the end of the sampling. The lab will contact you with the results approximately 3 weeks from when you send in your samples.

If you need help reading your results, see our fact sheet "How to interpret my PFAS Laboratory Report" at **http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/pfas/fact-sheets/** or call DEC.

For more information and assistance with collecting your samples, contact:
Zuzana Culakova, Chemist, DEC Contaminated Sites Program 907-465-5346 or zuzana.culakova@alaska.gov