

Compliance Advice for PFOA in Class B Firefighting Foams

January 2022

Who we are

We are the Environment Agency. We monitor and enforce controls on certain chemicals - 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).

Why we are contacting you

We are writing to tell you about important information that may affect your business.

The UK POPs Regulation bans the production, placing on the market and use of substances, mixtures and articles containing Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), its salts and PFOA related compounds.

PFOA, its salts and PFOA related compounds remain in the environment for very long periods of time. They are toxic and gradually build up to harmful levels in living organisms.

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

There is currently an exemption in place for the use of PFOA, its salts and PFOA-related compounds in fire-fighting foam for Class B fires already installed in systems, including both mobile and fixed systems. This exemption is in place until 4 July 2025, subject to certain conditions being met.

What you need to do

You need to have confidence that you are compliant with the law.

To find out if the foam you hold contains 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.

If you intend to use or have a stockpile of Class B foam already installed in systems which contains or may contain PFOA, its salts and/or PFOA-related compounds, you have a legal obligation to meet the following conditions:

- Holders of 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.
- 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.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88

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.

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