

PFAS FAQ

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1. What are PFAS compounds?

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a group of thousands of long-lasting synthetic compounds used in many industries (including aerospace, automotive, food processing, pharmaceutical, clothing, construction, household products, cookware and firefighting) since the 1950s. PFAS can pass into the soil, water and air during production and use. Further detail on PFAS in Europe can be found in the links below:

- [Information on PFAS from the European Commission](#)
- [Information on PFAS from European Chemicals Agency](#)

2. How widespread is this issue?

PFAS is a global issue. Because of their widespread use and persistent properties, they have now been found in the environment, humans, animals, food, water and soil in almost every country in the world, not only at airports, fire stations, landfills, pharmaceutical and manufacturing sites, but even the most remote areas on the planet. The [Forever Pollution Project](#), a

collaborative investigation by journalists across Europe identified 44,500 sites where PFAS contamination has either been detected or is presumed to exist. These sites include landfills, pharmaceutical plants and manufacturing sites in addition to fire stations and airports. The Map of Forever Pollution identifies almost 90 sites in Ireland that could potentially be contaminated with PFAS.

3. How might someone be exposed to PFAS?

PFAS have been widely used for many decades and because they are now present in the environment, most people are exposed to these substances to some extent. PFAS can be found in drinking water, food, house dust, and certain consumer products. Routes of potential human exposure include ingestion, placental transfer and inhalation. In December 2025, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a joint position paper on PFAS in drinking water. This paper notes that PFAS exposure is associated with an increased risk of some adverse effects for human health. However, for

most of these potential health effects, current scientific evidence is not clear cut or conclusive.

- [HSE & EPA Interim Joint Position Paper](#)

4. What legislation is in place to address this issue?

Legislation to control and limit production of PFAS has come into effect within the European Union, and internationally, over the last decade. At EU level, the proposed Universal PFAS Restriction under the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) Regulation continues to progress. In 2026, the European Chemicals Agency's (ECHA) Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) adopted its final opinion supporting an EU-wide restriction, while the Socio-Economic Analysis Committee (SEAC) is expected to finalise its opinion by the end of 2026 before the proposal advances to the European Commission for consideration.

Differences exist in regulatory limits and guidance values for PFAS in the environment, i.e. in groundwater, surface water, drinking water and soils, between countries. A summary of the

legislation as it applies in Ireland is set out below:

- **Surface Water** (surface water refers to any water above ground): There is no legal requirement for organisations to monitor for PFAS in surface water. Under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), local authorities have a responsibility to monitor for PFAS in surface water. THE WFD sets an environmental quality standard (EQS) for surface water in catchment monitoring of an annual average of 0.65 ng/l for one PFAS compound. A new surface water EQS of 4.4 ng/L for a specified group of substances (Sum of 25 PFAS) was introduced in 2026 and is due to be transposed into Irish legislation by the end of 2027.
- **Groundwater** (groundwater refers to water beneath the surface, in rock and soil pore spaces and fractures): There is no legal requirement for organisations to monitor for PFAS in groundwater, unless specified in their industrial emissions licencing conditions. There is no relevant licencing requirement for Dublin Airport. New groundwater EQS for PFAS were introduced in 2026. These include a limit of 100 ng/L for the sum of 20 PFAS, aligned with the Drinking Water Directive, and a limit of

4.4 ng/L for the sum of four specified PFAS. These requirements are due to be transposed into Irish legislation by the end of 2027.

- **Soil / Concrete:** There is no legal requirement for organisations to monitor soil that is in situ for the presence of PFAS. Excavated soil / concrete must be tested to ensure it meets the Waste Acceptance Criteria (WAC) before transferring to an authorised facility. Excavated soils containing PFAS are managed at facilities licenced to accept it. The EPA is currently developing guidance for brownfield soil and stone by-product material that includes a PFAS screening approach, and a public consultation on the proposed framework was undertaken in 2026.
- **Drinking water:** Since January 11, 2026, Irish suppliers of water for human consumption must monitor PFAS under the [2023 Drinking Water Regulations](#). Two regulatory limits apply: Sum of 20 PFAS compounds: 0.10 µg/L (100 ng/L); PFAS Total: 0.50 µg/L (500 ng/L). The water supplied for consumption at Dublin Airport is supplied by Uisce Éireann.

5. What is the role of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on this issue?

The EPA is the designated Competent Authority in Ireland in relation to the EU Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Regulation. POPs are a group of chemicals, including many PFAS compounds, that remain stable over long periods of time and are harmful to humans and the environment. Under the EPA's Action Plan on POPs included in the POPs National Implementation Plan, several investigations related to PFAS were carried out, including the monitoring of groundwater and surface water for PFAS and examining the risks posed by PFAS.

- [What are PFAS? \(epa.ie\)](https://www.epa.ie/what-are-pfas/)

6. What is the role of Fingal County Council (FCC) on this issue?

Local authorities have responsibility for enforcing environmental legislation, including the Local Government (Water Pollution Act (1977)) and conducting any subsequent investigations. Local Authorities are also responsible for

the implementation of River Basin Management Plans (under the WFD) at county level. These plans set out the actions to be taken to improve water quality and achieve 'good' ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2027.

7. **What is the role of the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment on this issue?**

The [Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment](#) sets the overall policy framework for POPs legislation in Ireland, ensuring alignment with EU and global Stockholm Convention obligations. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the primary body responsible for the day-to-day regulation, implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of POPs legislation, including the National Implementation Plan and the development of strategies to address specific POPs issues within Ireland.

8. **What is the role of Uisce Éireann on this issue?**

Uisce Éireann has national responsibility

for monitoring PFAS in the drinking water it supplies, in accordance with the Drinking Water Regulations, as of January 2026.

■ [Drinking water tests \(water.ie\)](#)

9. **What is the role of the Health Service Executive (HSE) on this issue?**

The HSE manages the public health and social care services in Ireland and has a role in addressing threats to public health. The HSE has a statutory role in assessing potential public health risks associated with drinking water contaminants, including PFAS, and in providing health advice where necessary.

■ [Water and Health \(hse.ie\)](#)

10. **What was the source of PFAS on the Dublin Airport campus?**

The primary source of PFAS at airports was the use of aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF), which was used historically to fight petroleum-based

fires at airports. These foams contained fluorinated surfactants that helped the foam spread rapidly over flaming liquids, cooling and extinguishing fires efficiently. The use of these foams was common across Europe. In 2010 (under the Stockholm Convention on POPs and the EU POPs Regulations) one PFAS compound known as PFOS, was restricted. However, the PFOS free aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) products supplied by manufacturers after this date still contained other PFAS compounds not subject to regulatory restrictions.

11. **Do firefighting foams used at Dublin Airport today still contain PFAS compounds**

No. Since 2013, the firefighting foam used by Dublin Airport Fire Service has been an ICAO approved foam classified as fluorine free. Fluorine-free foams do not contain any PFAS compounds.

12. When was it discovered that PFAS was present on the campus at Dublin Airport?

During site investigations carried out at Dublin Airport in 2016, PFAS compounds were found in the soil at a site that previously housed the former firefighting training ground. This was monitored as part of the programme of works at this site. In subsequent years, legislation and awareness of this issue increased. This led to the appointment in 2021, of leading expert consultants to help daa to address PFAS at Dublin Airport. The consultants recommended continued monitoring across the campus to fully establish a conceptual site model of the PFAS in ground and surface water, which is ongoing.

Monitoring reports can be found here: [Sustainability at Dublin Airport](#)

13. What were the findings of the latest PFAS monitoring report?

The latest report presents the results of the 2025 monitoring programme

of surface water and groundwater at Dublin Airport. Monitoring results can vary from year to year depending on groundwater conditions, rainfall patterns and the specific locations sampled. The highest concentrations detected in 2025 were recorded in areas already known to be affected by historical PFAS use and do not represent PFAS levels across the airport as a whole. Ongoing monitoring is used to track trends and assess the effectiveness of management and remediation measures.

Higher concentrations detected in groundwater were in proximity to known contamination source areas on the North Runway and North Apron and the highest levels in surface water were detected to the east of the airport. The highest detections are summarised below.

■ **Surface water:** The highest level of PFOS detected in a watercourse during 2025 monitoring was 36 ng/L in a sample at the Kealy's Stream. The next highest level was detected in a sample from the Cuckoo Stream at 15.6 ng/L.

■ **Groundwater:** The highest levels of PFAS in groundwater were detected at the site of a former firefighting

training ground (maximum sum of 20 PFAS level 5,340.8 ng/l). On the North Apron the highest levels detected were 1,427.5 ng/L.

14. Does testing take place outside of the Dublin Airport campus?

Surface water monitoring was completed at 36 locations both within the airport boundary and at downstream locations off-campus within 4 km of the airport. The highest levels of PFOS were detected to the east of the airport in the Kealy's Stream, Sluice and Cuckoo Stream. Tributaries of the Ward River contain low levels of PFOS concentrations. In the Mayne, Ward and Santry waterbodies, greater concentrations of PFOS were detected in downstream monitoring locations than in upstream locations closer to the airport, indicating that the potential for other sources of PFAS to these waterbodies external to the airport.

15. Is the drinking water at Dublin Airport affected?

The drinking water supplied at Dublin Airport is provided by Uisce Éireann and

is not taken from groundwater sources or wells at Dublin Airport.

16. What are you doing now?

Our PFAS investigation programme remains ongoing and is focused on improving understanding of site conditions and informing any future management measures, where required. The investigation of PFAS in groundwater and surface water is a complex process that requires the collection of data over time to understand environmental conditions, identify trends and inform risk assessments. As a result, investigations are undertaken in a phased manner. The work is being carried out in accordance with EPA guidelines and in consultation with the relevant regulatory authorities.

Key activities during 2026 include:

- Continued groundwater and surface water monitoring across the campus to track PFAS concentrations and environmental trends over time.
 - Ongoing engagement with regulators and other relevant stakeholders to discuss investigation findings and planned next steps.
- Additional targeted groundwater monitoring wells have been installed across the campus to address identified data gaps and enhance the investigation programme. Information gathered from these wells is being used to improve understanding of groundwater conditions, PFAS distribution and potential pollutant linkages within the Conceptual Site Model (CSM).
 - Preparation for the next phase of risk assessment work, which will build on the information gathered through the investigation and monitoring programme.
 - Identification and evaluation of potential management options, where appropriate, based on the outcomes of ongoing investigations and risk assessment activities.

Glossary

PFAS: Per- and polyfluoroalkyl stances

PFOS: Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid

ng/l: nanogram per litre

µg/kg: microgram per kilogram

mg/kg: milligram per kilogram

For further information visit:

[https://www.dublinairport.com/
corporate/ corporate-social-
responsibility/sustainability](https://www.dublinairport.com/corporate/corporate-social-responsibility/sustainability)