



Policy Alert: Revised EPA Regulations on “Forever Chemicals”

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Action: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](#) the reversal of recently implemented regulations on maximum contaminant levels (MCL) of four of six “[forever chemicals](#)” (PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA, and mixtures containing two or more of PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA, and PFBS) found in drinking water. MCLs for two other common contaminants, PFOA and PFOS, will remain in place with extended compliance deadlines by two years to 2031. These standards were [established](#) in April 2024, and included a three-year initial monitoring period prior to meeting the five-year deadline for compliance. Administration officials argue that the updated standards will provide greater regulatory flexibility for water systems and reduce the cost of water bills while still protecting public health and allowing the EPA to enforce existing standards.

Key Insights

- PFAS have become known as “forever chemicals” given the long amount of time they take to breakdown. While they are found in many everyday products, exposure at high concentrations [have been linked](#) to adverse health effects. A 2023 [U.S. Geological Survey study](#) found that at least 45% of US tap water is estimated to have at least one type of forever chemical detected. As the Administration continues to review and modify standards previously introduced, the EPA maintains the most up-to-date drinking water regulations on its [website](#).
- EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin outlined the reversals as better balancing PFAS exposure mitigation with regulatory burden and the impact of higher costs on

consumers. The 2024 regulations received [several legal challenges](#) from chemical companies, trade associations, and local water agencies arguing EPA had exceeded its authority under the [Safe Drinking Water Act](#). EPA was granted a 60-day stay in February to review the rule, pausing litigation, which was [extended in April](#) for an additional 30 days.

- The updated standards come after Administrator Zeldin [announced a series of new actions](#) to address PFAS contamination, which included efforts to restructure the agency toward greater coordination, reassess existing statutory obligations for better enforcement and implementation, and enhance collaboration with public stakeholders at the state and local level, along the lines of a similar [2019 Action Plan](#).
- Opponents of the Biden-era regulations [filed a petition](#) in early May to the EPA to amend reporting requirements on PFAS substances, arguing that a 2023 [rule](#) did not provide a standard exemption process similar to that outlined in the [Toxic Substances Control Act \(TSCA\)](#). On May 13, the EPA released an [interim final rule](#) extending deadlines on PFAS reporting to April 2026, meeting one of the requests made in the petition.
- Environmental groups have [criticized](#) the reversal as increasing the risk of exposure to PFAS in drinking water systems and previewing legal challenges under a provision of the [Safe Drinking Water Act](#) prohibiting a weakening of standards.

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