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PFAS in New York State

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Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals, including perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), used in the production of a wide variety of consumer goods. PFAS have been commonly found in food packaging, household cleaning products, stain repellents, pesticides, and fire-retarding foam. PFAS can collect in water and soil, where the contaminants enter the food chain or are directly consumed by humans.

Despite no longer being produced in the United States, PFAS are persistent in the environment and readily accumulate in the human body, with half-lives in the human body ranging from 4 to 10 years. The most common impact on human health is high cholesterol, but some PFAS can cause low infant birth weights, effect the immune system, disrupt thyroid hormone balances (PFOS), and is possibly a human carcinogen¹ (PFOA).

PFAS chemicals have been phased out by industry, but can still be found in air, soil, and water, including sources of drinking water. Common sources of exposure come from food production in soil contaminated by PFAS, biodegradation of consumer products, production facilities that formerly used PFAS, and contaminated drinking water sources. The contaminated drinking water is normally localized to communities near industrial facilities that used PFAS, oil refineries, airfields, and other areas where PFAS may have been used in firefighting or related training operations.

In January 2021, via regulatory oversight given by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Division of Environmental Remediation (DER) released a technical guidance document titled, "Sampling, Analysis, and Assessment of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)," requiring sampling and analysis of environmental media for PFAS as part of remedial programs under 6 NYCRR Part 375.

The EPA does not have a validated method for analysis of PFAS for solids or non-potable waters, at this time. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP) also does not currently offer certification for PFAS in matrices other than finished drinking water. Under DER's Part 375 remedial programs, laboratories must hold ELAP certification for PFAS in drinking water and



Soil Sampling with ATL Geoprobe
Model 7822DT

¹ International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)

follow the rest of the analysis requirements in the technical guidance document. It is also best practice to adhere to these guidelines for assessing PFAS at sites that are not under the jurisdiction of a Part 375 remedial program.

Guidance values for limits in soil have been developed, but soil cleanup objectives (SCO) are not planned to be established until at least a proposal and approval in a future revision to 6 NYCRR Part 375-6. The current guidance gives limit values for PFOA and PFOS, based on the anticipated site use for soil and groundwater. While regulations are in progress, it is important to rely on knowledgeable environmental scientists and engineers to ensure that sampling and analysis are completed reliably and in accordance with the most recent and updated regulatory standards.

If you have a project that may require soil, water, or air sampling for PFAS or any other analyte, ATL, a WBE certified company, has experienced environmental professionals located throughout New York State to perform sampling and coordinate applicable analysis.

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