http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/pfas-cleanup-shawn-valosin-s450.png



Fire departments from more than 60 counties have identified unwanted PFAS-containing firefighting foam for disposal through this program.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, together with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), are today announcing the start of a PFAS-containing firefighting foam waste collection and disposal program. The 2021-23 biennial budget signed by Gov. Evers allocated $1 million to the DNR and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for administration of a program to collect and dispose of PFAS-containing firefighting foam waste. North Shore Environmental Construction Inc., a Wisconsin-based company, was selected through the state's competitive bidding process to complete this project. They will be collecting and disposing of at least 25,000 gallons of PFAS-containing firefighting foam waste from fire departments throughout Wisconsin.



"Protecting our state from harmful PFAS contamination is a top priority for my administration, and I'm proud of the work we're doing to tackle this very real problem in communities throughout the state," said Gov. Evers. "We also want to make sure our dedicated emergency services

workers, who show up to work every day to keep their communities safe, are healthy, safe, and protected while they are on the job. The firefighting community has been instrumental in making this program a reality, and we're grateful for all their work to learn about how they can help keep themselves and their communities safe from PFAS."

As part of the Year of Clean Drinking Water, Gov. Evers created the Wisconsin PFAS Action Council (WisPAC) in 2019 and charged the Council with developing a state action plan to respond to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in Wisconsin. WisPAC recommended the development of a PFAS-containing firefighting foam collection, disposal, and replacement program in the PFAS Action Plan, released in December 2020, and provided updates on this program in their PFAS Action Plan Progress Report released earlier this year.

Additionally, based on the recommendations from WisPAC, Gov. Evers and Attorney General Josh Kaul earlier this year filed a lawsuit against three Wisconsin manufacturers and 15 other defendants for "wrongful, deceptive, and tortious conduct" that led directly to PFAS contamination of Wisconsin's water, property, and natural resources. Wisconsin taxpayers are currently facing enormous costs to address PFAS contamination, costs the lawsuit alleges should be borne by those responsible for their presence throughout the state. The lawsuit seeks to "recover all costs, expenses, and damages associated with Defendants' tortious conduct, including—but not limited to—restoration and loss-of-use damages, natural-resource damages, and the costs of investigating, abating, containing, preventing, treating, removing, and remediating PFAS contamination in Wisconsin. The State also requests punitive damages to reflect Defendants' reprehensible conduct."

"Investing in and protecting our uniformed first responders and the communities they serve from PFAS exposure is something we can all agree on in Wisconsin," said Fire Chief Michael Stanley of the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association. "Our fire departments have shown tremendous interest and enthusiasm not only looking to safely dispose of PFAS-containing foam, but also to help educate themselves and their communities about PFAS."

In total, fire departments from more than 60 counties have identified unwanted firefighting foam for disposal through this program. Many fire departments have already switched to PFAS-free foam alternatives and have been storing the unwanted PFAS-containing foam in their fire houses because of the costs and logistical challenges associated with disposing of it. Fire departments interested in participating in the foam waste collection and disposal program may contact North Shore at info@nsecinc.com or (262) 255-4468.

Under state law, use of PFAS-containing firefighting foam is prohibited except during emergency firefighting operations or during testing at a facility with measures in place to prevent discharge of the foam to the environment and sewer.

PFAS are a group of human-made chemicals used in numerous products, including Class B

firefighting foams used to extinguish flammable liquid fires. These chemicals do not break down easily in the environment and can cause negative health impacts in humans. More information about PFAS in Wisconsin is available on the DNR's PFAS website .