

Albion Park – Program Update Factsheet

Background to the project

In 2016 FRNSW engaged GHD Pty Ltd (GHD) to undertake an environmental investigation into the presence of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on FRNSW's Albion Park training site.

The investigation is part of a review of a number of FRNSW sites across NSW where legacy firefighting foams containing PFAS have been stored, used and disposed of.

PFAS are emerging contaminants, which means that their ecological and/or human health effects are unclear. FRNSW is investigating to better understand the nature and extent of PFAS across its sites and assess potential risks to human health or ecology, including the identification of pathways through which people may be exposed to these chemicals.



FRNSW Albion Park Training Site (shaded in yellow), and surrounding community

Previous Investigations

The FRNSW Preliminary Investigation into the presence of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances

(PFAS) on, and in the vicinity of, FRNSW's Albion Park training site was completed in February 2017.

Environmental sampling was undertaken in December 2016. This involved collecting surface water and sediment samples; soil samples and groundwater samples.

The results confirmed the presence of PFAS in the samples collected. In some cases, PFAS levels are above the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) health based guidance values.

A more detailed assessment (DSI) of the surrounding area was completed in May 2017. We distributed a water use survey to help identify if and how local residents used groundwater or surface water. Surface water and sediment samples; soil samples and groundwater samples were collected on properties in the vicinity of the training site to identify any potential pathways where people may be exposed.

Project update – February 2018

A report detailing the results of this DSI has been reviewed by the EPA and published on FRNSW's website.

The report and information on local residents' water use is now with the NSW PFAS Taskforce for review, to determine if any precautionary advice is needed to help landholders minimise their contact with these chemicals.

Any precautionary advice given by the EPA will be tailored to each individual landholder based on their specific water use. If the provision of precautionary advice is required, landowners will be contacted directly by the EPA.

The advice will not apply to everyone in the community.

Management of information collected from the property

Information obtained by FRNSW during course of the sampling programs, including those results taken from residential properties, are being used as part of the broader project scope to understand the nature and extent of PFAS contamination in the area surrounding the site. We will also use this information when we engage with local and state authorities, as well as the local community. The information will help, to identify what management action, if any, may be needed.

Reports of the investigations will be published on the project website www.fire.nsw.gov.au/pfas. The names and addresses of property owners will not be included in the report.

PFAS and firefighting foam

PFAS is a class of manufactured chemicals that was used in aqueous film forming foam (referred to as AFFF). It was used extensively worldwide from the 1970s due to its effectiveness in fighting liquid fuel fires.

The firefighting foams (AFFF) now used by FRNSW are more environmentally sensitive and do not contain PFAS.

Guidance values

The Commonwealth Department of Health has calculated drinking water quality and recreational water quality values for use in site investigations in Australia. These values are based on the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) health based guidance values for PFOS and PFOA, which are in the form of a tolerable daily intake. A tolerable daily intake is a level of daily oral exposure over a lifetime that is considered to be without significant health risk for humans.

Further information on health-based guidance values for PFAS can be found on the Department of Health's website (included at the end of this factsheet).

Health

Most people living in developed nations are likely to have some levels of PFAS in their body because these compounds have been used in domestic products like non-stick cookware, fire retardant fabrics including carpet, and furniture for example. FRNSW is following the guidance of the Department of Health on PFAS, which states that currently there is no consistent evidence that exposure to these PFAS causes adverse human health effects. Current guidance values are a precautionary measure while further research is conducted into potential health effects of PFAS.

Further information

Further information about the FRNSW PFAS Investigation can be found on our website at www.fire.nsw.gov.au/pfas

Information on PFAS and the PFAS investigation program being undertaken by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) can be found on the EPA website at www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Mediainformation/pfasinvestigation.htm.

Information on PFAS health effects and exposure pathways can be found on the Department of Health's website at.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas-hbgv.htm>

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