

# Communicating about PFAS While Maintaining Public Trust

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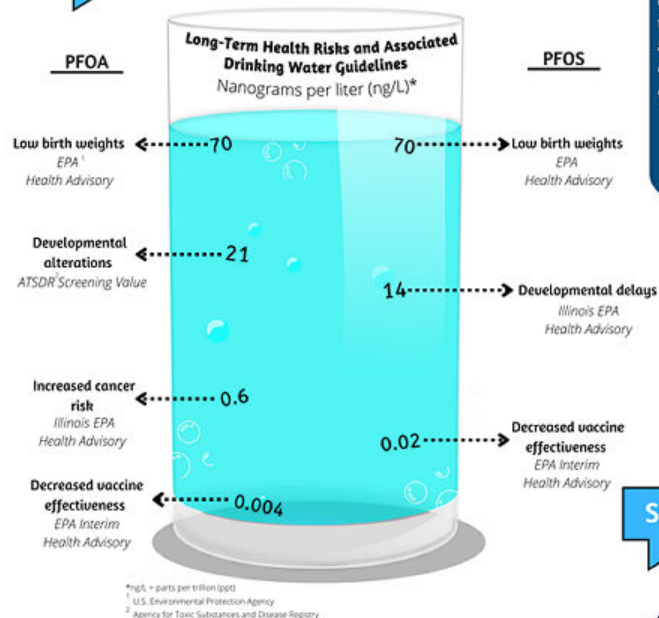


# How are you feeling today? (Words and emojis work!)

How do you feel when you read the following information about PFAS?

# PFAS in Drinking Water

## What are the risks?



## What we know...

There are thousands of different per-and-polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Because of their widespread use, these manmade chemicals can sometimes be found in drinking water.

Most of what is known about the human health effects of PFAS exposure is based on studies of two chemicals, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). These chemicals have been detected in some Illinois drinking water supplies above levels of concern.

There are potential health risks within a wide range of PFAS concentrations.

## Other possible health effects

- Increased cholesterol/triglycerides
- Liver damage
- Increased risk of ulcerative colitis
- Disruption to thyroid hormones
- Decreased fertility in women
- High blood pressure during pregnancy
- Kidney, breast, or testicular cancers

## Should I test my well for PFAS?

If you live near a community where PFAS have been detected in the community water supply or a site where PFAS may have been released, you should consider testing your well for PFAS. IDPH or your local health department can provide assistance.

## What can I do about PFAS?

### Treatment



PFAS can be removed by:

- Carbon Filtration
- Kitchen faucet
  - Fridge
  - Pitcher
  - Whole-home

- Reverse Osmosis System
- Under kitchen sink
  - Whole home



### Health Care

Talk to your physician about a PFAS detection in your water supply. They may assess the need for:

- A blood test for PFAS
- Specific wellness exams

They may also provide guidance on reducing your PFAS exposure.

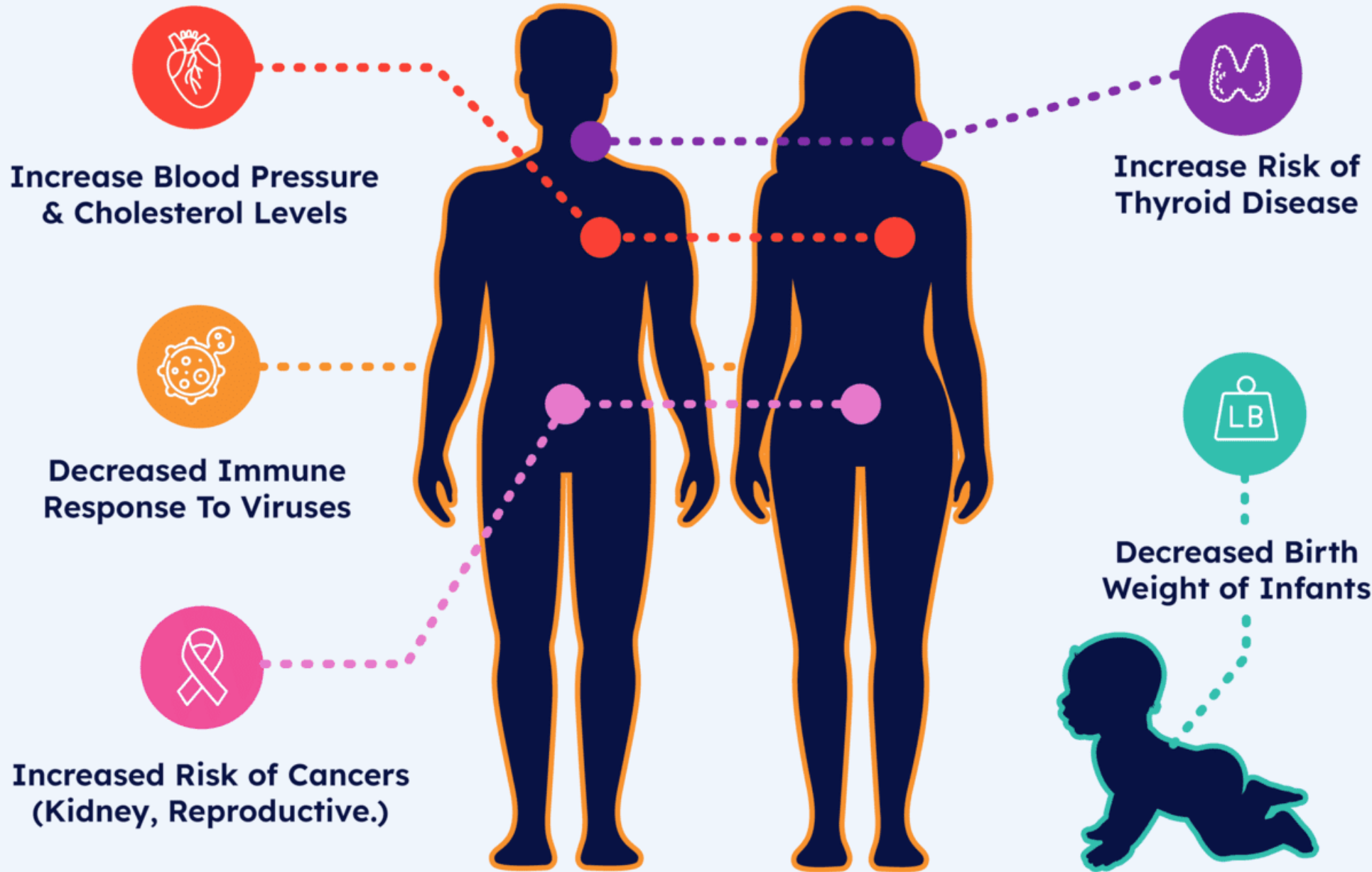
## Questions?

## Contact Us:

IDPH Toxicology

Phone: 217-782-5830

Email: [DPH.Tox@illinois.gov](mailto:DPH.Tox@illinois.gov)



# The PROBLEMS with PFAS



HOW DOES IT GET INTO OUR BODIES?



Cooking with nonstick pans



Products containing PFAS



PFAS-contaminated food and water



PFAS in air and dust



HEALTH PROBLEMS LINKED TO PFAS

Kidney and testicular cancer

High blood pressure and pre-eclampsia

Higher cholesterol

Lower infant birth weights

Decreased vaccine response in children

## PFAS

- Short for **per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances**, chemicals used in products such as non-stick cookware, food packaging, water-resistant clothing, and stain-resistant carpeting
- Also called '**forever chemicals**,' they can take up to 1,000 years to break down in nature

## WHAT CAN WE DO?



INDIVIDUALS – **avoid products with PFAS** and ask policymakers to limit or ban its use

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS – **advise patients on how to avoid PFAS** and support limits on its use

BUSINESSES – **phase out use of PFAS** and avoid non-essential uses

POLICYMAKERS – **limit or ban PFAS**

# TIPS FOR INFANTS

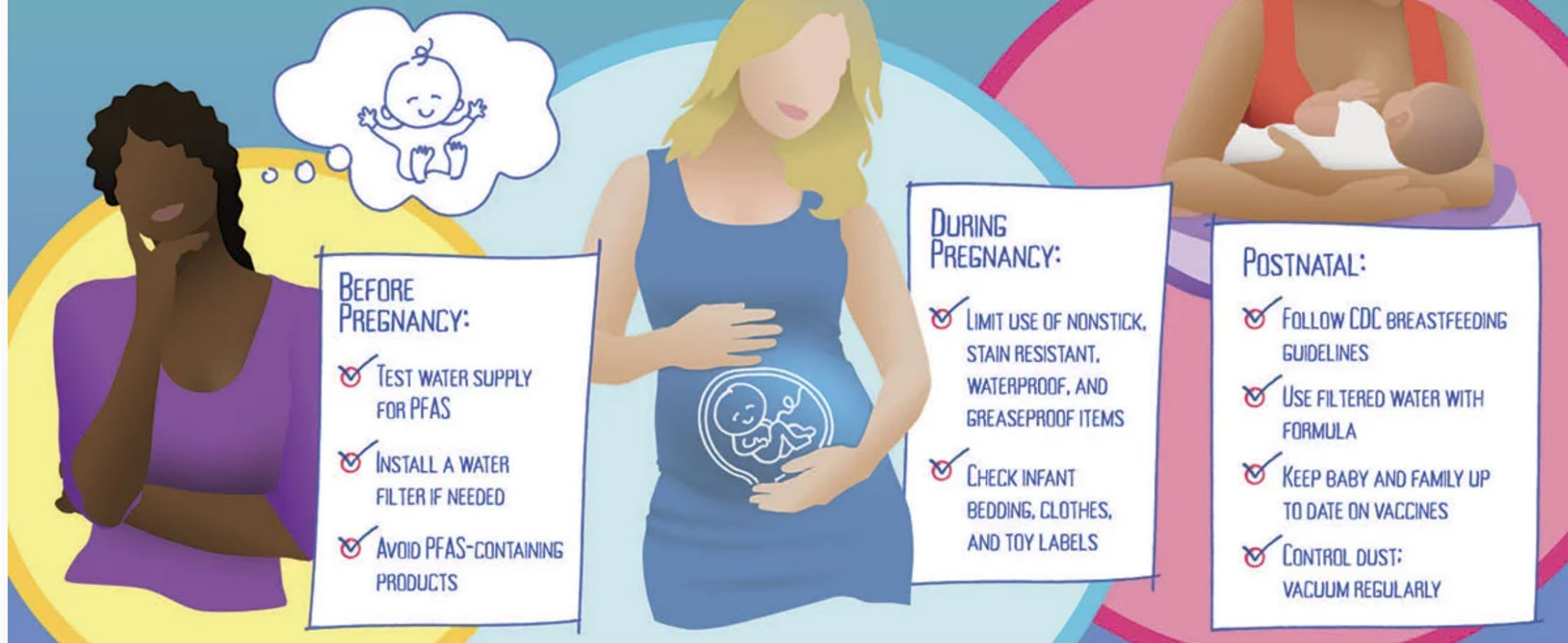


**STEEP**

Sources, Transport, Exposure & Effects of PFAS  
UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND SUPERFUND RESEARCH PROGRAM

Thinking about planning for or even welcoming a new baby into your family? Every new parent wants to make the best preparations for their baby's healthy development and growth.

Here's one more suggestion: check out possible exposure to **PFAS chemicals** – think nonstick, stain resistant, and waterproof/resistant.



## BEFORE PREGNANCY:

- ✓ TEST WATER SUPPLY FOR PFAS
- ✓ INSTALL A WATER FILTER IF NEEDED
- ✓ AVOID PFAS-CONTAINING PRODUCTS

## DURING PREGNANCY:

- ✓ LIMIT USE OF NONSTICK, STAIN RESISTANT, WATERPROOF, AND GREASEPROOF ITEMS
- ✓ CHECK INFANT BEDDING, CLOTHES, AND TOY LABELS

## POSTNATAL:

- ✓ FOLLOW CDC BREASTFEEDING GUIDELINES
- ✓ USE FILTERED WATER WITH FORMULA
- ✓ KEEP BABY AND FAMILY UP TO DATE ON VACCINES
- ✓ CONTROL DUST: VACUUM REGULARLY



# Which one of these info graphics makes you the most worried about PFAS?

**Which one of these info graphics makes you feel more informed about PFAS--less worried?**

# If your water had low levels of PFAS would you drink it?

Yes

No

Filter first

Bottle water

# How Community Trust is Challenged

**Trust is a feeling. How do you want people to feel about your utility?**

# The water industry has had a history of continuous improvement without panic



Arsenic Rule

2000

2001

2004

LT2 ESWTR

2003

2006

2012

Stage 2 D/DBP  
Rule

2003

2006

2013

Today, people  
have become  
fearful about  
water

## Top 10 fears among Americans for 2022:

1. Corrupt government officials — **62% afraid**
2. People I love becoming seriously ill — **60.2% afraid**
3. Russia using nuclear weapons — **59.6% afraid**
4. People I love dying — **58.1% afraid**
5. The U.S. becoming involved in another world war — **56% afraid**
6. Pollution of drinking water — **54.5% afraid**
7. Not having enough money for the future — **53.7% afraid**
8. Economic/financial collapse — **53.7% afraid**
9. Pollution of oceans, rivers and lakes — **52.5% afraid**
10. Biological warfare — **51.5% afraid**

# Our most vulnerable customers are most affected by fear



Focus groups of low-income households show they are:

- ✓ Less satisfied with the quality of their water
- ✓ More likely to have experienced water quality issues in their home
- ✓ More likely to be taking actions to address water quality risks, including boiling their water and using an alternate source (even drinking soda to avoid drinking tap water!)
- ✓ More concerned about contaminants



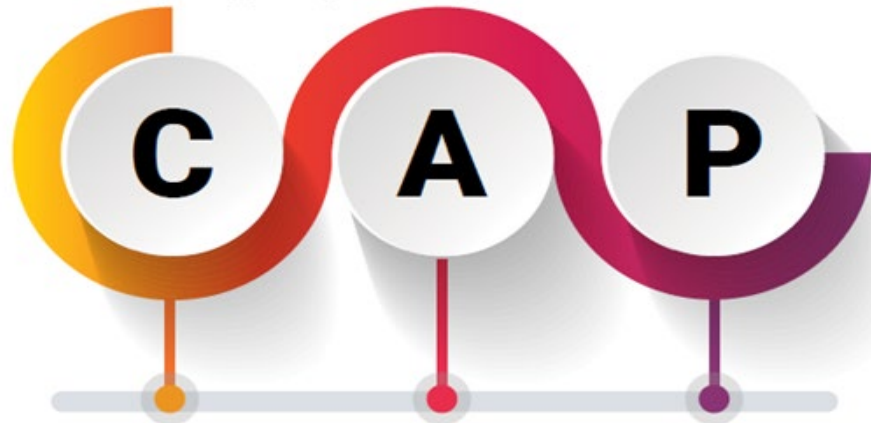
# Building & Maintaining Trust

# You are starting from a place of trust



**80%** of water bill payers **trust their water utility company.**

# A Risk Communication Guide for Water Utilities (AWWA, 2019)



Caring Message   Action Message   Perspective Message

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Meaningful and Achievable Steps You Can Take to Reduce Your Risk

## Lakewood Water District and PFAS: What You Need to Know



Lakewood Water District has detected PFAS in groundwater at certain locations in the District's water supply system. PFAS are a group of human-made chemicals that have the potential to adversely affect human health and the environment. The source of the PFAS in the groundwater is firefighting foam that was used at JBLM for decades.

### WE ARE TAKING ACTION NOW TO:



#### Protect Your Health

Your water continues to be safe to drink. The water delivered to customers' taps meets all state and federal drinking water regulations to protect public health.



#### Reduce Cost

The District is seeking every avenue of funding to help pay for water quality protection projects necessary to respond to PFAS.



#### Ensure a Reliable Water Future

Future reliable water supply options are being evaluated by a team of engineers. The most cost-effective measures will be pursued.



#### Find Long-Term Solutions

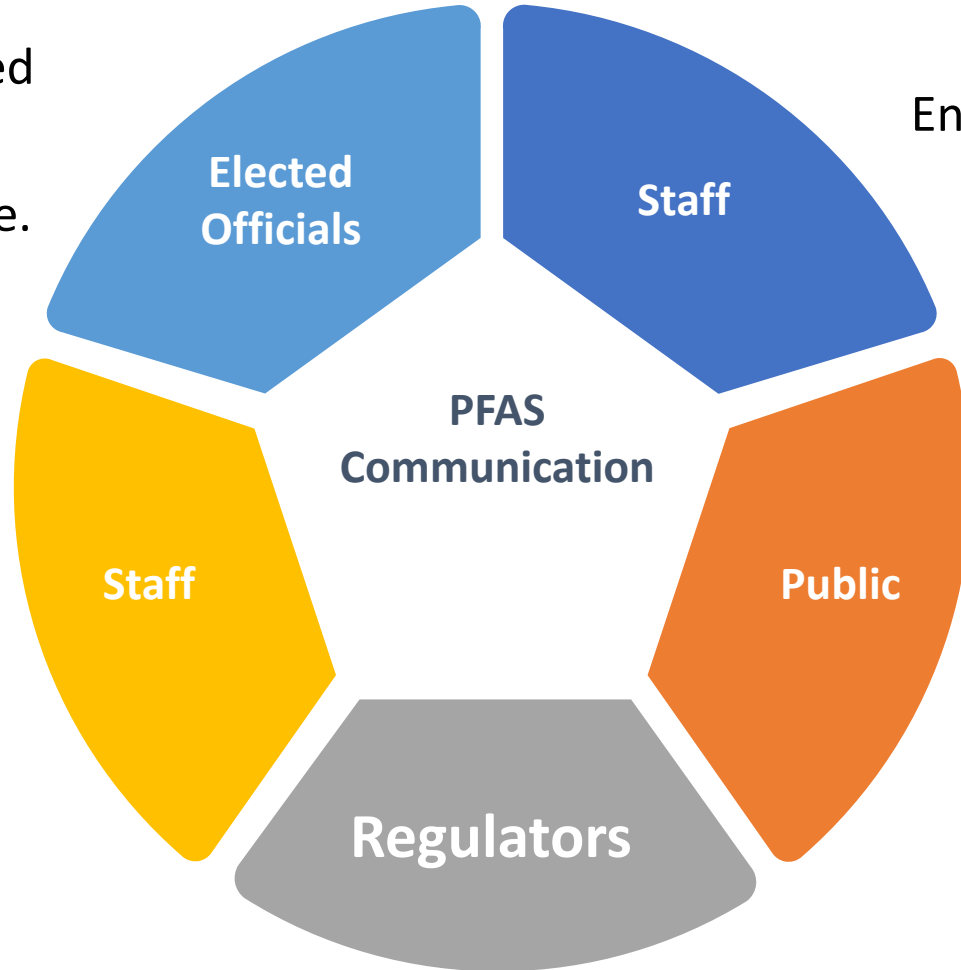
District leadership is working closely with the State of Washington and others on new rules for water treatment and the long-term cleanup of PFAS sites.

Learn more:

[www.LakewoodWater.Org](http://www.LakewoodWater.Org) • (253) 588-4423

# Be flexible and adaptable in your response

Keep **elected officials** informed on the topic and actions underway to address the issue.



Engage **credible third-party experts** to help tell the story.

Educate and train **staff** about PFAS and how to speak with customers.

Use **engaging and informative** communication tools and methods.

Be the **primary source** of information on PFAS issues.

Prepare for **public notice requirements**.

Questions?