

Commissioners' Corner



Jeremy DeMar

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are a large family of chemicals that are not found naturally in the environment. Since the 1950's, PFAS chemicals are found in many common consumer products such as food packaging, non-stick cookware, water resistant clothing, cleaning products, and some cosmetics. PFAS are also used in certain types of firefighting foams utilized by the U.S. military, local fire departments, and airports.

Known as "Forever Chemicals", PFAS are a public health concern because they do not break down in the environment and can travel long distances in groundwater. When introduced into drinking water, they have the potential to build up in animals and humans over time and may lead to harmful health effects. Scientists are continuing to learn more about these substances, but there are thousands of PFAS chemicals, making it a challenge to study and assess all the potential human health and environmental risks.

PFAS chemicals are not yet regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act or other major U.S. environmental laws. Because of the lack of federal regulation, in January 2022, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) took the proactive step to implement new requirements for water utilities to begin monitoring and testing for five common types of PFAS.

The new regulation established State Action Levels (SALs) for certain PFAS chemicals. These are levels DOH has set for long-term daily drinking water to protect people's health. The SALs are set below levels that have caused health effects in animal studies while they work to establish health effect levels for humans. Exceeding any SAL triggers purveyors to perform follow-up actions, including notifying affected customers, increasing monitoring and testing, identifying the source, and developing strategies to reduce the contaminant. Starting in 2023, utilities are required to begin testing over the next three years.

To add to the complexity of the problem, PFAS chemicals in drinking water are measured in parts-per-trillion (ppt). For reference, one ppt is equivalent to one

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Lakehaven Links

Our Mission

The Lakehaven Water and Sewer District is committed to the continued delivery of safe, reliable and high quality drinking water and environmentally responsible sewer service to our customers.

Board of Commissioners

Len Englund, President
Don Miller, Vice-President
Laura Belvin, Secretary
Peter Sanchez, Commissioner
Jeremy DeMar, Commissioner

Regular Board of Commissioners meetings are held at 6:00 p.m. the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month. Please check the website for meeting information.

Contact Us

Federal Way: 253-941-1516
Tacoma: 253-927-2922
After Hours Emergencies:
253-941-1516

Business Hours:
Monday – Friday
8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

www.lakehaven.org

Commissioners' Corner, cont. from page 1

second in about 32,000 years or one grain of sand in an Olympic-sized swimming pool! Only until very recently has the technology been available to measure PFAS chemicals to this level of precision, and few laboratories are able to accurately perform these tests.



The good news...Lakehaven has performed preliminary testing of our sources and not found any PFAS in our drinking water exceeding State Action Levels. The challenge is that PFAS has been discovered above recommended levels in the water supplies of millions of Americans across the rest of the country. Because our number one priority is to deliver safe drinking water, Lakehaven will closely monitor PFAS regulations and continue our testing efforts as more research becomes available. More information on PFAS can be found on the EPA Website: www.epa.gov/pfas or the DOH Website: <https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/contaminants/pfas>

District Bond Sale Revisited

Last year the District issued eighty-five million (\$85,000,000) dollars of 25-year municipal bonds to fund numerous upgrades to the water and sewer system infrastructure. In the spring of last year, the Board, which had been contemplating the sale of the bonds for a couple of years, determined to go forward with the sale. One of the first steps was to obtain a bond rating. This resulted in the District receiving a rating of "AAA" from Standard and Poor's Global Ratings, the highest rating obtainable by a municipal issuer. After the District's bond underwriter marketed the bonds, the sale was completed in mid-September. The District received an "all-in" annual interest rate of approximately 2.2%.



As you would expect, interest rates are much higher now. Were the District to have sold the same bonds in September of this year, the likely annual interest rate would have been in the neighborhood of 4.2%. The annual costs of bonds issued this year would be about one million one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$1,125,000) higher. Correspondingly, the cost of the bonds over the 25-year repayment period would be approximately twenty-eight million dollars (\$28,000,000) higher. Clearly, the large savings on these bonds is going to help keep rates lower for many years!

2022 Hiring Update

As we watch 2022 come to a close, it is worth taking note of the record number of new hires at the District this year. The District has hired twenty-two new employees in 2022, a level of hiring that is nearly double that of the next highest year. Some of the hiring was associated with the need to create and fill new positions, or to fill positions that had been vacant coming into the year. Other hiring was associated with abnormally high employee turnover, a common experience during COVID-19 for employers everywhere (six of the departures being for well-deserved retirements). All of this hiring has made it a busy year for our HR staff and the Department Managers that are involved in the hiring processes in their departments. We expect more hiring in 2023; just not at the hectic pace we have had this year. If you or someone you know is interested in employment in the water/wastewater industry, keep an eye on our website for job openings. We offer good pay, excellent benefits, a pension plan, and a friendly and exciting place to make a career in a rewarding and environmentally oriented industry!

