



CITY OF
Sturgis
MICHIGAN

130 N. Nottawa
Sturgis, MI 49091
(269) 651-2321

Contact: Andrew Kuk
E-mail: akuk@sturgismi.gov
Office Phone: (269) 651-2321

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Statewide PFAS Testing and What it Means for Sturgis

STURGIS – Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), are a group of manmade chemicals that have been widely used in industry and consumer products since the 1950s.

Recent discoveries of PFAS contamination in groundwater and drinking water in several communities across Michigan have brought PFAS to the forefront of drinking water safety. As an emerging issue in the state and nation-wide, it is important to understand the current environment surrounding PFAS and where Sturgis stands today.

PFAS have been classified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as emerging contaminants. Although there is more to learn, in recent years experts have become increasingly concerned by the potential effects of high concentrations of PFAS on human health.

In 2015 the City of Sturgis was required by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to test our municipal wells for six PFAS compounds. Two samples were collected from each municipal well, one in February and one in August of 2015. Results for all six compounds from both samples in all municipal wells were below the reporting limits of the test. This means the six compounds were not detectable at the testing limit set by the EPA at the time.

Starting in 2017, the State of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) made PFAS a priority, working proactively to set criteria for drinking water and identify potential areas of contamination.

In May of 2018, MDEQ sent a letter to all community water supply owners and operators throughout the state, including the City of Sturgis, detailing their statewide initiative to test drinking water from all community water supplies for PFAS. MDEQ is taking this precautionary step of testing these drinking water sources to determine if public health actions are needed.

As part of the testing process, each county in the state has been placed into one of four priority levels (Very High, High, Medium, & Low). St. Joseph County has been designated as a Medium sampling priority county. Based on the county's priority level, MDEQ has informed the City that water samples to test for PFAS contamination will be collected by MDEQ contractors from Sturgis wells by December 15, 2018.

The City of Sturgis will be proactive in communicating information regarding the PFAS issue, including results of the MDEQ's testing, when it becomes available. Please watch local media, the City's website, and the City's Facebook page for future news on PFAS as it relates to the City of Sturgis. For more information on PFAS and the State of Michigan's response to the issue, you can visit the State's PFAS response website at www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse.

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