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One-Guam Partnership to Keep Guam's Drinking Water Clean and Safe

ASAN, Guam (Aug. 8, 2018) To keep Guam's drinking water clean and safe, Joint Region Marianas (JRM) and the Guam Waterworks Authority (GWA) are working together to test and monitor all of the island's production water wells within their respective purview for *per*- and *poly*- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The best-known and most studied PFAS include two specific compounds perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS).

In 2016, the EPA issued total lifetime health advisory levels for PFAS chemicals PFOA and PFOS at 70 parts per trillion (also reported as nanograms per liter or ng/L). While there are no EPA drinking water regulations for these compounds, the EPA establishes these advisory levels to offer a margin of protection from potential adverse health effects resulting from lifetime exposure to PFAS in drinking water.

PFAS can be found in legacy fire-fighting foam known as aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) previously used on Guam for fire emergency response and training activities. It also can be found in many other commercial household products, including stain- and water-repellent fabrics, nonstick products (e.g., Teflon), polishes, waxes, paints, cleaning products.

"Safe drinking water for our entire island community is a top priority," said Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Marianas Commanding Officer and JRM Regional Engineer Capt. Dan Turner. "To that end and in keeping with the One Guam pillar, JRM and GWA have taken voluntary and proactive measures toward monitoring potable water wells to determine if PFAS compounds are detected at levels above those established in the EPA health advisory limits, and if confirmed will immediately shut down the well until remediated."

"The NAS-1 water well, which is a former Navy-owned production well and now owned by GWA tested both positive and then negative for PFAS in the previous reports," said JRM Environmental Specialist Maria Lewis. "Through recent efforts by GWA, NAS-1 now does have an operational Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) filtration system which eliminates any potential PFAS in the water entering the distribution system," Lewis added.

"GAC is a multi-stage filtration type system that is installed at the water well which is designed to treat the water for specific organic materials such as PFAS and related constituents by adsorption onto the carbon of the filter" said GWA General Manager Miguel Bordallo. "The GAC holds onto the organic material within the carbon until it is saturated, at which time the used GAC is replaced by new GAC," he continued. "Water flowing through these systems is re-tested after various stages of the process of passing through the carbon and the test results through final filter have been negative. The replacement procedure is executed when the tests show that the carbon is no longer able to capture the target material."

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JRM and GWA continue to be proactive in addressing these unregulated substances. GWA's A-23 and A-25 are two other wells that had significant levels for PFOS. According to GWA, the wells without treatment have been turned off while GWA works on procuring GAC systems for these sites to protect the public.

Throughout the United States, the Department of the Navy continues to take a proactive approach to identifying locations where PFAS may have been released into drinking water sources on installations and in surrounding communities.

More information on PFAS can be found at www.epa.gov and at www.secnave.navy.mil. In addition, water quality information is available at: https://www.cnmc.navy.mil/regions/jrm/om/water_quality_information.html; <http://guamwaterworks.org/communications/water-quality-reports/>.

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