

Environmental Investigation – Greenacre

Background to the investigation

Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) has engaged an independent environmental consultant to undertake an environmental investigation into the presence of per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on the Greenacre site.



FRNSW Greenacre Site and affected areas (outlined in red).

The investigation is part of FRNSW's review of a number of its sites across NSW where aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) containing PFAS has been stored, used and disposed of.

Due to the nature of the site, Greenacre has been identified as a **low risk** site. As it was used for the bulk storage of AFFF and was the location for the removal, disposal of and subsequent cleaning of AFFF contaminated vehicles the site warrants further investigation.

PFAS in Firefighting Foams

PFAS are a class of manufactured chemicals generally present in AFFF which was used extensively worldwide from the 1970s due to

its effectiveness in fighting liquid fuel fires. The firefighting foams now used by FRNSW are more environmentally safe and do not contain PFAS.

Other uses of PFAS

These compounds were also used internationally in a range of common household products and speciality applications, including in the manufacture of non-stick cookware; fabric, furniture and carpet stain protection applications; food packaging and in some industrial processes. As a result, most people are likely to have some levels of PFAS in their body.

An emerging contaminant

PFAS compounds are a contaminant of concern because of their persistence in the environment and their bio-accumulation properties. They are classified as 'emerging contaminants' which means their ecological and/or human health effects are unclear.

Objective of the investigation

The objective of the environmental investigation is to identify the nature and extent of PFAS on the site and any potential risks to human health or ecology, including the identification of pathways through which people may be exposed to these chemicals. The understanding of these risks will assist in developing mitigation and/or management strategies that may be needed to limit exposure.



Preliminary Site Investigation

The Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI) started in May 2016.

Some of the objectives of the PSI included:

- understanding site characteristics
- identifying possible PFAS **sources** both on and off site based on historical AFFF storage, use and disposal
- understanding possible migration/exposure **pathways** of PFAS to on or off-site **receptors**

Sources: where and when legacy AFFF was used

Pathways: how PFAS moves in the environment and the possible exposure pathways.

Receptors: people and the environment that may possibly be exposed to PFAS

These activities assist our understanding of potential impacts to people and the environment, from the use of AFFF.

Sampling

Sampling of soil, surface water and groundwater will take place between Monday 19th December and Wednesday 21st December.

Results will enable FRNSW to assess the nature and extent of PFAS on the site and will also inform the priorities for any future investigations.

Consulting with staff

FRNSW is committed to being open and transparent about these investigations. We will update staff as investigation reports are released.

The initial investigation will be completed in early January but analysis of results will take several weeks.

The project team will present findings and proposed recommendations to the Executive Leadership Team in early February and is expecting to be able to communicate results to staff by mid-February.

Further Information

We will maintain the currency of information on the intranet and provide information sessions as required. Phone contact through the 1800 number and email will provide further support to assist with information access as the investigation progresses.

Further 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/pfasiinvestigation.htm.

Contact the Project Team



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