

In 2017 NSW Mines Rescue (Mines Rescue) voluntarily entered the NSW Environment Protection Authority's (EPA) investigation program assessing the legacy of per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) use across NSW. Mines Rescue historically used PFAS-containing products to undertake fire fighting training. This practice had ceased by 2002.

As a result of past use of PFAS-containing fire fighting foams, initial investigation results have found PFAS in excess of the adopted Australian thresholds both onsite at the Hunter Valley, Lithgow and Newcastle Mines Rescue stations, and in locations adjacent to the sites.

While the results are in excess of the adopted thresholds, these thresholds are conservative. Other locations across Australia that have featured prominently in the media have PFAS levels much higher than those recorded to date at the Mines Rescue sites.

Mines Rescue is now entering Stage Three Investigations to continue to assess if there are potential exposure pathways through which people might ingest PFAS.

The Mines Rescue Station at Woonona was built after Mines Rescue had phased out the use of fire fighting foams containing PFAS; hence no testing is being undertaken at this site.

Finding PFAS in the environment does not mean there is a human health risk but it is important to assess if there are exposure pathways through which people might ingest PFAS.

Stage Three Investigations overview

The Stage Three Investigations will undertake further testing which may include further water and soil sampling, water use surveys and seasonal monitoring according to each Mines Rescue site's requirements.

Is my health at risk?

An Expert Health Panel for PFAS was established to advise the Australian Government on the potential health impacts associated with PFAS exposure and to identify priority areas for further research.

In May 2018 the Expert Health Panel for PFAS Final Report noted that there is no current evidence to suggest an increase in overall health risk related to PFAS exposure. However, the Expert Panel also said health effects cannot be ruled out at this time.

Because the risks are not fully known, the NSW Government takes a precautionary approach by monitoring PFAS contamination and limiting people's exposure to PFAS.

Regardless of PFAS being present, general advice from NSW Health recommends that people do not use groundwater for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene (including cleaning teeth and bathing) without testing and appropriate treatment.

Where can I find more information?

Sources and useful links for more information:

www.coalservices.com.au/PFASInvestigation

www.epa.nsw.gov.au/pfas

How can I contact Mines Rescue?

For more information please

Visit www.coalservices.com.au/PFASInvestigation

Call us on 1300 001 262 or

Email customerconnect@coalservices.com.au