

Top Stories

## Bottled Water, Testing Urged as “Emerging Contaminant” Leaches South of Gabreski Airport

July 22, 2016 Beth Young

Gabreski Airport in 1996

The Suffolk County Health Department has identified two “emerging” hazardous substances in public water supply wells near Gabreski Airport in Westhampton, and will be distributing bottled water to residents in the area who have private wells.



Clean drinking water was provided to residents living near Gabreski Airport from July 23, 2016 - more than a year before residents living near East Hampton Airport which is owned by and an agency of the Town of East Hampton (by Si Kinsella June 29, 2019).

The distribution will take place at the Westhampton Beach Village Hall this weekend from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, July 23 and Sunday, July 24 and Monday through Friday of next week from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The amount of the chemicals in the public water supply is below the EPA “lifetime health advisory level,” but private wells surrounding the airport have not yet been tested.

The Suffolk County Health Department plans to conduct a private well survey in the vicinity of the airport, with New York State providing laboratory analysis.

Properties most at risk are those served by private wells south of the Long Island Rail Road tracks, east of Beaverdam Creek and west of Quantuck Creek.

The two chemicals, known as PFOS and PFOA, are known by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as “emerging contaminants,” part of a class of chemicals known as perfluorinated compounds, which are currently unregulated by the federal government.

PFOA is perhaps best known as a component of teflon cooking pans, and has come under scrutiny this year after a *New York Times* exposé in January on health issues linked to the chemical near DuPont’s West Virginia chemical plants.

Perfluorinated compounds have also historically been used in firefighting foam and coatings that repel water, oil, stains and grease.

Water supply companies began to test their wells for the compounds in 2013.

The Health Department said in a press release Friday that “through monitoring conducted under a US EPA program known as the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule, PFOS was detected in public supply wells in the vicinity of the New York State Air National Guard Base at Gabreski Airport.”

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, as part of Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Water Quality Rapid Response Team, has informed Suffolk County and the Air National Guard that the DEC is investigating Gabreski Airport as a potential inactive hazardous waste disposal site, also known as a State Superfund site, because firefighting foam was or is currently being used at the base.

Gabreski Airport is just **one of hundreds** of military bases nationwide under scrutiny for groundwater contamination from PFCs this year, because firefighting foam is often used for training and extinguishment of vehicle and aircraft fires on military bases.

In April of this year, due to the emerging issues surrounding PFCs, the DEC adopted **emergency rules** regarding the storage and use of firefighting foams by fire departments throughout the state.

The DEC is currently searching for the source of the contamination at Gabreski Airport.

“Out of an abundance of caution, if you are using a private well as your water supply, you may want to consider using bottled water for drinking, cooking and preparing infant formula until your well is tested and the quality of your supply can be assured,” said the Health Department’s press release Friday. “This sampling effort applies only to private wells, as the public water supply has already been addressed and sampled to ensure water quality meets health criteria.”

“The results of this sampling have already been reported to residents in the annual water quality report and to the US EPA,” they add. “Measures have been taken to address the public water supply. Currently, the public drinking water supply in the area is below the current EPA lifetime health advisory level of 0.07 ppb.”

The lifetime health advisory level is the level above which long-term exposure can be damaging to human health – PFCs have been linked to cancer, kidney, liver and immune disorders. The EPA’s lifetime health advisory level for PFCs was only just set in May of this year.

The Suffolk County Health Department’s Office of Water Resources is available to test residents’ water, free of charge, by calling 631.852.5810. This notice does not affect residences hooked up to public water.

Residents with questions are being asked to call the New York State Water Quality Hotline at 800.801.8092 (Monday to Friday: 9 am to 8 pm; Saturday: 9 am to 3 pm).

The EPA’s fact sheet on PFOAs is online [here](#).

This news comes just as the DEC and Suffolk County begin work on **another cleanup** of PCB contamination from a former dumping pit at the airport.

<https://www.eastendbeacon.com/bottled-water-testing-urged-as-emerging-contaminant-leaches-south-of-gabreski-airport/>