The number one focus of the city’s drinking water quality team is to provide safe drinking water; and we take this responsibility very seriously. That is why we have produced this handout and continue to revise it as needed.

REMOVING PFAS ACTION PLAN: As you may have heard, we continue to face water quality challenges such as with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (commonly referred to as PFAS). So, we created an action plan to keep residents informed about what we are doing to eliminate PFAS contamination in our source and drinking waters. As part of our action plan, we recently installed a new type of granular activated carbon in our filters which improved the water quality by reducing PFAS even further below health advisory levels. For PFAS contaminants with a health advisory level, our goal is to keep levels below 10 ppt (parts per trillion). This means for every trillion gallons of water, which is the equivalent of 20 Olympic-sized swimming pools, there are only a few drops or less of PFAS.

MONITORING AND TESTING: Each month, our water quality team sends water samples from the intakes at Barton Pond and finished drinking water to an independent lab to test for PFAS. Testing and analysis for PFAS requires specialized protocols and equipment and the method is very complex. Water samples are sent to an independent lab where they can detect PFAS levels as low as 2 ppt.

PROTECTING OUR WATERWAYS: The water quality team at the City of Ann Arbor continues to support on-going investigations to determine any possible sources of PFAS that could enter our source waters. We understand eliminating the sources of PFAS is the best way to keep it out of our drinking water. That’s why the city has partnered with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) in its efforts to identify sources and prevent PFAS from entering our waterways.

LOOKING AHEAD: Even though the city’s PFAS levels are well below the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) health advisory levels, that’s not good enough for us, which is why we continue to improve our treatment processes and strive to learn more about other emerging contaminants. One way the city is dedicated to continuous improvement is by actively participating in research. In partnership with North Carolina State University, a leader in PFAS research in the U.S., the city is exploring new technologies for removing PFAS from drinking water. What’s important for our more than 125,000 customers to know is we are dedicated to searching for solutions for any water quality challenge we may face. After all, we all drink Ann Arbor’s water – and we take the responsibility to stay ahead of any potential threats to the safety of our drinking water very seriously.

STAY INFORMED: Our drinking water team will continue sharing PFAS water quality data on our website as soon as the data is validated. We also address water quality concerns and provide customer updates through a variety of city communication channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor, a monthly online resident newsletter and regular email notifications. To review the PFAS levels and to learn more about your drinking water and the City of Ann Arbor’s efforts to protect its safety, visit www.a2gov.org/PFAS.
Frequently Asked Questions about PFAS

What is PFAS?
It is an abbreviation for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances which are man-made chemicals used in metal plating and a wide variety of consumer products including fire-suppressing foam, carpets, paints, polishes and waxes. The most studied types of PFAS are perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS).

What are the advisory levels for PFAS?
The EPA has set a lifetime health advisory level for the combined amount of PFOS and PFOA in drinking water not to exceed 70 parts per trillion (ppt). That is the level, or amount, below which no harm is expected from these chemicals, based on daily consumption over a lifetime. The State of Michigan has indicated their intent to regulate PFAS and develop a maximum contaminant level by October 2019. City staff will be following the regulatory process.

Can people bathe and swim in water containing PFAS?
The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services MDHHS has issued a “Do Not Eat Fish” advisory for the Huron River and advises people and their pets to avoid foam on the Huron River. Foam can have much higher amounts of PFAS than the water, and swallowing foam with PFAS could be a health risk. Swimming or bathing in water containing PFAS is not a health concern because the amount of PFAS is typically low compared to the foam. Although swallowing PFAS is the main way to get it in your body, an accidental swallow of river or lake water is not a health concern. Although, current science indicates PFAS does not move easily through the skin, it’s best to rinse off foam, including family pets, after contact and bathe or shower after the day’s outdoor activities. None of this information changes recommendations for people’s water used at home. The City of Ann Arbor is exploring the installation of hand-rinsing stations in close proximity to the city’s canoe livery this summer. These will be in addition to hand-washing facilities available in public restrooms at the liversies.

What are the levels of PFAS in Ann Arbor’s drinking water?
In 2019, PFOA and PFOS levels in Ann Arbor’s drinking water have been less than 10 ppt. As part of our action plan, it is our goal to keep PFOS and PFOA below 10 ppt, significantly below the 70 ppt health advisory level. Levels for the 24 PFAS that we are testing for twice per month can be found on our website at www.QualityWaterMatters.org. Ultimately, our goal is to work with local and state partners to eliminate PFAS at the source and keep it from entering our waterways.

What is being done to protect our drinking water from PFAS?
In 2018 and 2019, the city installed a new type of granular activated carbon in our filters to increase removal of PFAS from our drinking water. The filters have been working as expected and the levels of PFAS have further dropped below the EPA’s health advisory levels, some to undetectable amounts.

How does the Michigan Science Advisory Workgroup’s (Workgroup) new health-based drinking water value recommendations for seven types of PFAS affect the city’s water quality management plans?
On June 27, 2019, the Workgroup published health-based drinking water recommendations for seven PFAS: PFNA, PFOA, PFHxA, PFOS, PFHxS, PFBS and GenX. The city’s current PFAS management strategy remains more restrictive than current regulations and is protective of public health, even with the announcement of these new health-based values. The city anticipates that new information on PFAS health impacts will continue to be released over the coming months and year. The city is committed to reviewing all new information and will adjust its management strategy as necessary to ensure public health is protected.

Why doesn’t the city test for PFAS at my home?
PFAS concentrations do not change from the water treatment plant to your home, therefore, there is no need to test for PFAS within homes.

What are you doing to protect our waterways?
We continue to leverage our partnerships with local organizations, such as the Huron River Watershed Council, to help ensure that our watershed is adequately protected from substances that might impact your drinking water. In addition, the city is lobbying to ensure that the state and its environmental regulatory agencies remain focused on protecting our waterways. While emerging contaminants may continue to be detected, our dedicated staff are prepared to not only face these challenges, but also remain an industry leader in pioneering solutions.

Where can I see test results of PFAS in our water?
Independent lab verified testing results of PFAS in the source water and finished drinking water are posted on the city’s website at www.a2gov.org/PFAS.