



U.S. AIR FORCE

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. AIR FORCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Expanded Site Inspection for Water Contaminants Set to Begin Air Force to Assess Water Contamination Risk at Cannon AFB

Cannon AFB – The Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC) will conduct sampling here to assess the potential for drinking water contamination stemming from past firefighting activities.

The sampling is part of the Air Force’s proactive, service-wide investigation to assess potential risk to drinking water from Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS), two compounds found in Aqueous Film Forming Foam, used by emergency fire response teams at commercial airports, the Air Force and other services to combat petroleum-based fires. PFOS and PFOA are unregulated contaminants, however the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued a health advisory (HA) for levels in drinking water in excess of 70 parts per trillion (ppt). Initial tests in several of Cannon’s ground water monitoring sites registered levels with varying degrees of excess of the HA.

The Air Force has replaced legacy firefighting foam at Cannon AFB with a new, more environmentally responsible formula that contains no PFOS and only trace amounts of PFOA. Cannon AFB completed replacement of legacy AFFF in its fire vehicles with the replacement foam last year.

An expanded site investigation is being conducted to confirm the accuracy of the first tests and if any other areas have been impacted. The sampling will take place within land inside the vicinity of Highway 467, Roosevelt Road and Highway 6, encompassing a four-mile radius outside of the base boundary. There are no potential pathways to public water systems in Clovis or Portales.

As part of the Air Force’s three-step approach — identify, respond, protect — AFCEC completed a preliminary assessment in March 2018 that identified potential release areas where AFFF may have been used at Cannon AFB. The expanded site inspection, which will begin on or about August 27th, will verify releases through groundwater, surface water, soil and sediment sampling. The sampling and testing process is estimated to take approximately two months from the commencement of sample collection to the provision of results.

“The data and site information we gather during the investigation will help us identify if there is contamination in ground water sources,” said Lt Col Russell Gheesling, 27th Special Operations Wing Civil Engineer Squadron commander.

Cannon Air Force Base greatly values its role as part of the Clovis and Portales communities and is committed to maintaining a transparent and open dialogue. In the coming weeks, we will be holding a Town Hall Meeting to answer any questions our community partners, regulators and other stakeholders may have about this topic.

“We are committed to protecting the health of our Airmen and community partners and will conduct a thorough investigation to ensure we know if this contaminant has made it beyond the boundaries of Cannon Air Force Base,” said Col Stewart Hammons, 27th Special Operations Wing commander.

Further updates, to include a schedule for the Town Hall Meeting, will be provided as they become available.

For more information on the Air Force’s response to PFOS and PFOA please visit <http://www.afcec.af.mil/WhatWeDo/Environment/Perfluorinated-Compounds/> or contact Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center Public Affairs at 1-866-725-7617 or email AFIMSC.PA.Workflow@us.af.mil.

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