

# Who Pays The Price?

## The Growing Costs of PFAS Pollution

**It costs manufacturers relatively little to add PFAS to their products, but the public pays millions—even billions—to clean up contamination from those products.**

Manufacturers add PFAS to products to make them nonstick or resistant to heat, water, or stains for **\$50–\$1,000 per pound of PFAS**.<sup>1</sup> PFAS from those products eventually end up in the environment, exposing people and wildlife to these toxic chemicals.

### PFAS are everywhere—the cost of cleanup is prohibitive.

Once in the environment, it can cost millions—sometimes billions—to clean up a pound of PFAS pollution. Today, we are forced to accept low levels of these toxic chemicals escaping into the environment because the costs to capture that contamination would be astronomical:

- \$2.7 to \$18 million per pound to remove PFAS from wastewater.
- \$700,000 to \$4 million per pound to get PFAS out of biosolids.
- \$200,000 to \$18 million per pound to get PFAS out of landfill leachate.<sup>2</sup>

### Removing PFAS from drinking water is even more expensive.

While sampling data show less than 10 percent of Washington State's public drinking water is contaminated with PFAS,<sup>3</sup> treating contaminated water is still a significant expense for federal, state, and local governments:

- A 2025 Department of Defense report anticipates \$9.3 billion in nationwide costs associated with PFAS-contaminated drinking water from federal facilities.<sup>4</sup>
- Based on current sampling information and the American Water Works Association pricing models, it will cost nearly \$1 billion in public and private money to treat PFAS-contaminated drinking water in Washington State.<sup>5</sup>
- The City of Vancouver, the third-largest municipal provider of drinking water in Washington, identified PFAS in several of its drinking water supplies in 2020. A 2023 report estimated it could cost the city \$235 million to adequately treat their drinking water.<sup>6</sup>

Since 2019, **Washington State has spent over \$30 million to monitor, research, and clean up PFAS**.<sup>7</sup> That includes over \$12 million to drill new drinking water wells in Lakewood to replace irreparably contaminated wells.<sup>8</sup> **PFAS-attributable disease costs an estimated \$5.52 billion each year** to patients, insurance companies, and government healthcare in the United States.<sup>9</sup>

**“The frustration is ... the cost. We didn't create this problem. But we have to deal with this.”**

**Marshall Meyer**

Engineering manager for Lakewood Water District<sup>10</sup>

**Mission impossible? It would cost up to **\$18 Million****

to remove 1 pound of PFAS from wastewater.

**It will cost nearly **\$1 Billion****

to clean up Washington State's PFAS-contaminated drinking water.

**PFAS-attributable disease costs an estimated**

**\$5.52 Billion**

each year to patients, insurance companies, and government healthcare in the United States.

**Manufacturers pay **\$50–\$1,000****

per pound of PFAS when adding it to their products.

**Where federal agencies have largely failed to regulate upstream uses of PFAS, states are leading the way by regulating PFAS in consumer products and preventing future contamination.**

## State-level regulations let us act sooner.

Washington State has regulated PFAS in firefighting foams, food packaging, cosmetics, carpets and rugs, stain and water-resistant treatments, and furniture. We're working to regulate it in apparel, cleaning products, cookware, waxes, and polishes.

This is how we'll stay ahead of the curve—by addressing new chemicals before they become the next cleanup site.

## Preventing pollution is the solution.

Washington State's actions have already protected human health and the environment from toxic chemicals in products. Here are a few examples of how we're keeping toxics out of our environment and saving money:

- **Lead:** 1.6 million pounds of lead pollute the environment each year in the United States when **wheel weights** fall off automobiles—but not in Washington, thanks to a 2011 state law.<sup>11</sup>
- **Copper and asbestos: Vehicle brakes** in the United States no longer have copper or asbestos. Manufacturers changed their products nationwide to comply with Washington State's Better Brakes law.
- **Deca-BDE:** Washington was the first state to ban Deca-BDE, a highly toxic and persistent flame retardant used in **furniture and electronics**. After this state ban, manufacturers agreed to stop producing, importing, and selling it in the United States by 2012.<sup>12</sup>
- **Phthalates:** In 2008, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and Washington, among other states, banned the use of certain phthalates in **children's products**. Following the regulation, the concentration of banned phthalates decreased significantly in people.<sup>13</sup>

## Lead paint: When pollution prevention is too late.

Lead is a potent neurotoxicant that continues to harm many children in the United States. While European countries banned lead in paint as early as 1909, it wasn't banned in the United States until 1978. The result: nearly 70 years of preventable exposure.

Roughly 29 million U.S. homes still contain lead-based paint, including 1.3 million in Washington State.<sup>14</sup> Cleaning up these homes typically costs over \$10,000 per house<sup>15</sup>—expenses borne by small business owners and property owners.\*

Highly persistent chemicals like PBDEs, PFAS, mercury, and lead continue to cycle through the environment and people's bodies for decades after their intended use, extending their harm and requiring costly cleanup.

States have the right and the obligation to pass policies that ease these financial and health burdens on their residents. State-level regulation lets us act sooner, protecting people and the environment before harm is done and millions or billions are needed for cleanup and healthcare.

\* Costs adjusted for 2025.

**29 Million**

U.S. homes still contain lead-based paint.

**1.3 Million**

Washington State homes still contain lead-based paint.

A property owner would have to pay over

**\$10,000**

to remove lead-based paint from their home.

## Endnotes

Scan the QR code to view the endnotes:



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We offer translation and interpretation services at no cost. To request them, email [HWTRPubs@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:HWTRPubs@ecy.wa.gov) or call (360) 407-6700. If you call, ask for an interpreter to be connected with one.

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## Endnotes

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- 7 Washington State Department of Ecology. (2024). [PFAS Statewide Funding Strategy: Four-Year Plan for Prevention, Reduction, and Mitigation in Washington State](https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2404058.html) (Publication No. 24-04-058).  
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