

PFAS in private wells in Washington

Focus on real estate transactions

Photo by Erika Fletcher on Unsplash.

Selling or buying land or a home in an area with PFAS contamination?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination has been found in groundwater in areas of Washington (see page 2). Although PFAS chemicals are not manufactured in Washington, they can still be released to the environment from consumer and industrial products. Firefighting foam is a key suspected source of PFAS-contaminated drinking water in Washington.

Potential buyers have the legal right to know about possible hazards, and sellers are required to disclose information about their property.

How does this affect me if I am selling?

Sellers and brokers must comply with real estate disclosure law. [Chapter 64.06 Revised Code of Washington](#)¹ (RCW) creates seller disclosure forms that describe the property being sold. Transactions include a seller disclosure statement, known as Form 17. You can get this form from your real estate broker or copy the questions from [RCW 64.06.020](#).² The disclosure requirements apply to improved and unimproved properties, with some exceptions. If you have questions about Form 17, please seek legal advice.

Form 17 asks about groundwater contamination (Section 7.G). If your well was tested and PFAS was found, by you or others, you must provide those results to prospective buyers. Sellers also are required to disclose “material defects” (Section 9.A), which could include groundwater contamination.

Form 17 asks if there are any water treatment systems (Section 2.A.5) and whether they are owned or leased. If you or a party responsible for contamination has installed a treatment system for PFAS, sellers are required to disclose and describe the treatment system.

We recommend testing your well if it hasn’t been sampled already. Use an [accredited laboratory](#)³ and include PFAS in the analysis. There are two test methods. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) method 533 or 537.1 will detect the PFAS that have a [drinking water standard](#).⁴

If you have questions about your assessed property value, please contact the appraiser listed on your annual notice.

How does this affect me if I am buying?

Require the seller disclosure form. Ask the seller and real estate broker if they are aware of PFAS testing on or near the property. Unless you expressly waive the right to receive the disclosure statement, the seller must provide Form 17 ([RCW 64.06.020](#)). You **cannot waive** the right to Form 17 if the answer to any of the questions in the Environment section are “yes.”

Require the seller to test the well and include PFAS as part of the conditions. Verify the seller is using an [accredited laboratory](#) and EPA method 533 or 537.1. Both will detect the PFAS that have a [drinking water standard](#).

¹ <http://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=64.06>

² <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=64.06.020>

³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/LabAccreditation>

⁴ <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/331-751.pdf>

Known cleanup sites in Washington with potential drinking water contamination

Ecology knows there is PFAS contamination in groundwater in these areas. If your well is in one of these areas, it may be impacted.

- [Bailer Hill](#),⁵ San Juan Island
- [Joint Base Lewis McChord area](#)⁶
- [Lower Issaquah Valley](#),⁷ King County
- [Naval Base Kitsap \(Bangor\)](#)⁸
- [US Army Yakima Training Center](#)⁹
- [West Plains](#),¹⁰ Spokane County
- [Whidbey Island Naval Air Station](#)¹¹

Health concerns

Scientists are still studying how PFAS affect people's health. Much of what we know comes from toxicity testing in laboratory animals. In people, higher exposure to certain PFAS may lead to:

- Increased cholesterol levels.
- Decreased birth weights.
- Decreased immune response to vaccines.
- Changes in liver enzymes that indicate liver damage.
- Increased risk of blood pressure problems during pregnancy.
- Increased risk of thyroid disease.
- Increased risk of testicular and kidney cancer.

How to reduce your exposure

You can reduce your exposure to PFAS by:

- Minimizing consumption of water and food that contain PFAS.¹²
- Installing filters to remove PFAS from your tap or well water.¹³
- Reducing use of products that contain PFAS by using PFAS-free consumer products.¹⁴
- Reducing your exposure to PFAS in consumer products.¹⁵

Related Information

- [Seller Disclosure Form 17](#)
- [Contaminated sites with PFAS in drinking water, Ecology](#)¹⁶
- [Department of Health's PFAS webpage](#)¹⁷
- [PFAS Explained, EPA](#)¹⁸
- [PFAS and Your Health, ATSDR](#)¹⁹

Contact information

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ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6831 or email at ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/ADA>. For Relay Service or TTY, call 711 or 877-833-6341.

⁵ <https://ecology.wa.gov/bailer-hill-pfas>

⁶ <https://go.ecology.wa.gov/jblmpfas>

⁷ <https://ecology.wa.gov/LIV>

⁸ <https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/BANGORPFAS/>

⁹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/cleanup-site-yakima-training-center>

¹⁰ <https://ecology.wa.gov/west-plains>

¹¹ <https://go.ecology.wa.gov/NASWI>

¹² Learn more at <https://doh.wa.gov/PFAS>

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyUEA5ap9kE>

¹⁴ <https://pfascentral.org/pfas-free-products/>

¹⁵ <https://go.ecology.wa.gov/reduce-PFAS-video>

¹⁶ <https://ecology.wa.gov/pfas-water-sites>

¹⁷ <https://doh.wa.gov/pfas>

¹⁸ <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-explained>

¹⁹ <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/index.html>