

## **Mayor's Letter for August 1 Talk of the Town**

On July 8, the City of Prescott learned that recent test results found the presence of man-made chemicals called perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) in two of its water production wells located in the airport area. While PFOA and PFOS are not currently regulated by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) nor the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), there is research evidence to support the possibility that these compounds may be harmful to human health. The City took immediate action to shut down the two wells that afternoon. Shortly thereafter I met with the Public Works Department and the City Manager's Office to assess the situation, begin planning for remediation, and testing on the other City wells. Our team met with ADEQ staff, and I hosted a Town Hall meeting where over 70 citizens attended either in person or virtually. During our meeting, ADEQ agreed to test our other five wells. We expect to receive these test results by the end of September.

The testing of the airport wells was part of a state-wide ADEQ testing of over 236 sites, primarily near airports and other areas where firefighting training took place. This is because the firefighting foam used in aircraft accidents, while highly effective at protecting lives and property, does contain these chemicals. ADEQ informed us that 51 wells around the state showed levels higher than the Health Advisory Level (HAL), including the two city airport wells.

It should be noted that back in 2018, the same City wells were tested by the ADEQ. Both wells passed, with levels far below the EPA guidelines at the time. Since then, the EPA has changed the requirement to a far more stringent level. I would also like to stress that these levels are only guidelines, not regulations. It is anticipated that the EPA will issue Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) regulations for these chemicals in 2024, after a formal federal rulemaking process, which includes a public comment period. It is highly likely that the MCL will be far higher than the current HAL. For now, the City is voluntarily following the advisory levels. We will not turn on the two airport wells until we have a way to remove the chemical effectively from the water, or meet the advisory level as recommended.

We will report more information as it becomes available. We will continue to work with the ADEQ and engineering firms to identify and implement a program to remove the chemicals from City water as quickly and effectively as possible.

Be assured that the quality and safety of our drinking water is of the utmost importance to me and our entire City leadership and staff. Even before this finding, we monitored our wells monthly for several contaminants, including arsenic, and publish those results online. We will work to swiftly and effectively remedy this situation. In the meantime, citizens can be assured that the quality of the drinking water is safe.

We have a page dedicated to this matter, including a link to the Town Hall video, past press releases and links to resources from the ADEQ, EPA and other sources.

<https://www.prescott-az.gov/water-sewer/pfas-and-pfos-resource-center/>

