

# Seattle Public Utilities

See attached letter.



January 11, 2024

Meredith Marshburn  
Department of Ecology  
Hazardous Waste Toxics Reduction  
300 Desmond Dr. SE  
Lacey, WA 98503

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Dear Ms. Marshburn,

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) strongly supports the Washington State Department of Ecology's (Ecology) proposed restrictions on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in consumer products. As a public utility serving over 1.4 million residents in Seattle and King County, we are acutely aware of the environmental and health threats posed by these persistent chemicals. Restrictions to reduce or eliminate these chemicals prevent their entry into the waste stream and cut off new sources of these toxins, protecting our communities and reducing the need for challenging and costly remediations.

Over the past decade, SPU has invested in proactive monitoring, cutting edge treatment and removal technologies, and public education campaigns to protect our communities from toxic contaminants. However, addressing the source of PFAS contamination at the point of production is crucial for long-term protection of our water and land resources and public health.

Ecology's proposed restrictions on PFAS in consumer products represent a critical step in the right direction. By prioritizing safer alternatives in everyday items like carpets, clothing, and furniture, Washington can significantly reduce the amount of PFAS entering our environment through incidental discharges and waste stream disposal.

In addition to the proposed restrictions on PFAS containing products, we are particularly supportive of the following aspects of the proposed regulations:

- **Transparency and reporting:** Requiring manufacturers to disclose PFAS use will provide valuable information for consumers and policymakers, making it easier to identify and phase out unnecessary PFAS.
- **Science-based approach:** Grounding the regulations in sound scientific evidence ensures they are effective in protecting public health and the environment.
- **Protecting vulnerable communities:** This regulation prioritizes the health and safety of communities disproportionately burdened by chemical exposure, safeguarding those who face the highest risks due to their occupations.

While SPU is strongly supportive of the proposed restrictions, we believe that more aggressive action is warranted to address this family of chemicals. Expediting further restrictions of PFAS use, using a higher standard for "essential use exemptions", and moving away from toxic chemicals in general are all necessary to achieve our shared goals for public and environmental health. First, SPU supports expediting restrictions

on PFAS in consumer products, specifically outdoor gear, cookware, and sealers. These are products known to contain high levels of PFAS and they urgently need to be addressed. Second, SPU believes that viable alternatives exist for most goods and the essential use exemption should be a last resort. Continued manufacturing and use of PFAS in these products risks human health and environmental exposure, and this allowance should be weighed carefully against any perceived benefits that these products convey.

Finally, SPU encourages Ecology to press industry to remove these chemicals from their products all together. Many consumer products contain unnecessary PFAS for convenience. There must be a determination made to balance the convenience of these products against their potential impact, and SPU does not believe that the conveniences that PFAS may provide in the short term counterbalances the long-term risk and impacts of these chemicals. For our residents, and environmental justice communities in particular, removing one burden like PFAS goes beyond environmental protection, it's a step towards unraveling the legacy of environmental racism and restoring fairness to those who have borne the brunt of it for far too long. True source control requires that toxic chemicals be removed from use to prevent impacts to the environment, to avoid the health impacts to our communities, and to prevent reactive remediations, all of which are paid for by local communities.

Seattle Public Utilities appreciates the Department of Ecology's efforts to control toxic substances and we urge the Department to adopt and implement the proposed PFAS restrictions as soon as possible. While we recognize that transitioning away from PFAS will require collaboration and innovation, SPU stands ready to work with Ecology, manufacturers, and other stakeholders to implement these regulations effectively. In addition, we respectfully request that Ecology consider further steps to eliminate the risk PFAS usage poses to our state.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

  
Andrew Lee (Jan 12, 2024 08:18 PST)

Andrew Lee, General Manager/CEO  
Seattle Public Utilities