



For 20-plus years, EPA has failed to regulate 'forever chemicals'

By **Scott Faber** (</news-insights/our-experts/scott-faber>) (EWG)

JANUARY 9, 2020



The Environmental Protection Agency was first alerted to the health hazards

of toxic fluorinated chemicals, known as PFAS, in 1998. In the decades since, the agency has failed to set enforceable regulations on PFAS in drinking water, food, food packaging and a wide array of other everyday consumer goods.

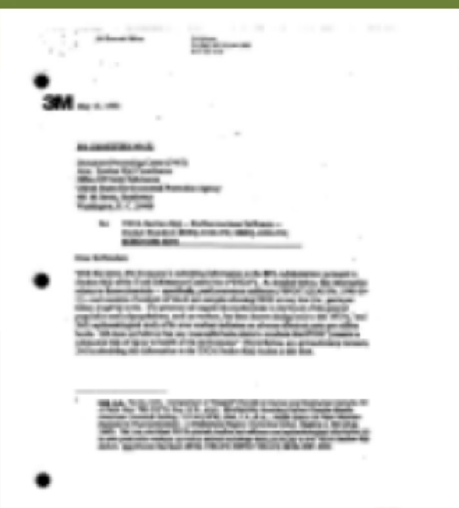
In 2009 and 2019, the EPA announced toothless PFAS “action plans” that fall far short of what is needed to protect Americans, even as reams of studies have linked some PFAS to cancer, reproductive and immune system harm, thyroid disease and other serious health impacts.

[DOWNLOAD ALL DOCUMENTS](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/EPA-PFAS-Timeline-10-21.pdf) (<https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/EPA-PFAS-Timeline-10-21.pdf>)

1998

3M alerts EPA that PFOS, the PFAS chemical in Scotchgard, builds up in blood.

[DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/1998_3M-Alerts-EPA.pdf?_ga=2.24803514.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520) (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/1998_3M-Alerts-EPA.pdf?_ga=2.24803514.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)



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1998

3M sends rat studies to EPA, showing liver damage from PFAS exposure.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/1998_Publication-Strategy.pdf?_ga=2.133396622.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)

1999

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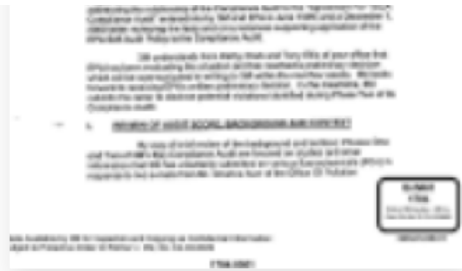
EPA AUDIT (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2001_EPA-3M-AuditResponse.pdf?_ga=2.93418525.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)



1999
EPA begins audit of 3M studies.
3M RESPONSE (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2001_3M-TSCA-SubstantialRiskAlert.pdf?_ga=2.87080856.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)



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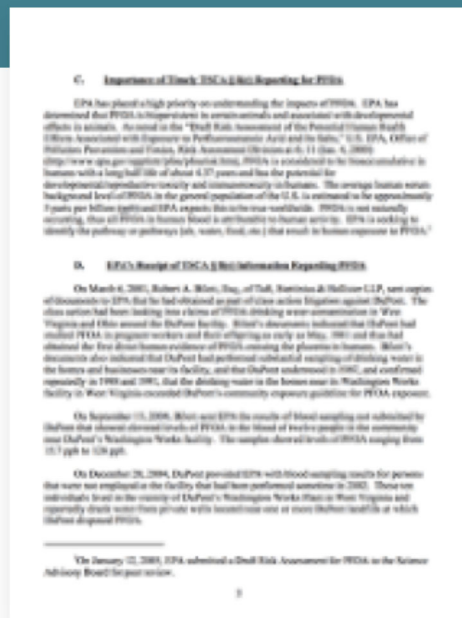


2001

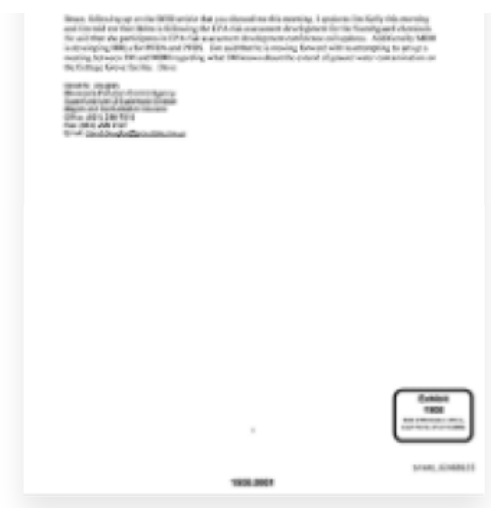
Attorney Rob Bilott provides EPA with secret DuPont documents on PFOA, the PFAS chemical in Teflon.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT ([https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2001_Bilott-Submits-](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2001_Bilott-Submits-to-EPA.pdf?_ga=2.124851338.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)

[to-EPA.pdf?_ga=2.124851338.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2001_Bilott-Submits-to-EPA.pdf?_ga=2.124851338.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520))



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2005

DuPont urges EPA to “restate safety of [PFOA] products and no health effects.”

[VISIT SITE](https://theintercept.com/2015/08/20/teflon-toxin-dupont-slipped-past-epa/) (<https://theintercept.com/2015/08/20/teflon-toxin-dupont-slipped-past-epa/>)

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2005

EPA fines DuPont \$10.25 million for failing to report “substantial risk of injury to human health” from PFOA.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT (<https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline>

[/2005_EPA_Fines_DuPont_Over_PFOA.pdf?_ga=2.123845386.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520](#))

Reference News Release: EPA Settles PFOA Case Against DuPont for Largest Environmental Administrative Penalty in Agency History

Release Date: 12/14/2005
Contact Information:

Contact: Dave Ryan, 800-624-4000 / dryan@epa.gov

(Washington, D.C.—Dec. 14, 2005) DuPont will pay \$10.25 million — the largest civil administrative penalty EPA has ever obtained under any federal environmental statute — to settle violations alleged by EPA over the company's failure to comply with federal law. Under the settlement, filed with the Agency's Administrative Appeals Board, DuPont is also agreeing to \$1.25 million for the Supplemental Environmental Program (SEP).

The settlement, which will need to be approved by the FOM, would require DuPont's compliance status to be reported in the Supplemental Environmental Program (SEP).

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substantial risk information about chemicals they manufacture, process or distribute in commerce.

"This is the largest and administrative penalty EPA has ever obtained under any environmental statute. Not by a lot, by a lot," said Dennis M. Tokayama, assistant administrator for the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "EPA assesses violations of toxic substance laws seriously and is committed to enforcing those laws. This settlement sends a strong message that companies are responsible for proactively informing EPA about risk information associated with their chemicals."

2006

EPA brokers a voluntary agreement with DuPont, 3M and other companies to phase out the use of PFOS and PFOA. Announcing the agreement, EPA says "to date, EPA is not aware of any studies specifically relating current levels of PFOA exposure to human health effects."

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_EPA-StewardshipProgram.pdf?_ga=2.163322428.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)



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2006

Following **requests from DuPont** (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_DuPont-Leverages-EPA.pdf), EPA tells consumers that it **is safe to use** (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_EPA-PFOA_Safe.pdf) products made with PFAS.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_DuPont-Leverages-EPA.pdf?_ga=2.27811772.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)



2006

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3M shares hundreds of secret documents with EPA, resulting in more than \$1.5 million in penalties.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT ([https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_3M-1.5Million-](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_3M-1.5Million-Fine.pdf?_ga=2.136549168.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)

[Fine.pdf?_ga=2.136549168.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_3M-1.5Million-Fine.pdf?_ga=2.136549168.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520))



2006

EPA Science Advisory Board draft report finds PFOA to be a “likely human carcinogen.”

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT ([https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_EPA-SAB-](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_EPA-SAB-LikelyCarcinogen.pdf?_ga=2.122400907.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)

[LikelyCarcinogen.pdf?_ga=2.122400907.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2006_EPA-SAB-LikelyCarcinogen.pdf?_ga=2.122400907.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520))



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2009

EPA publishes a “provisional health advisory” for PFOA and PFOS.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT (https://static.epa.gov/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2009_EPA-HealthAdvisory.pdf?_ga=2.27414716.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)



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2009

EPA publishes first PFC action plan.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT ([https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2009_EPA-Action-](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2009_EPA-Action-Plan.pdf?_ga=2.69294992.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)

[Plan.pdf?_ga=2.69294992.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2009_EPA-Action-Plan.pdf?_ga=2.69294992.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520))



2012

EPA requires one-time monitoring by public water systems for some PFAS chemicals.

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[Addition.pdf?_ga=2.162550972.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520\)](#)



2015

EPA proposes a Significant New Use Rule (SNUR) for long-chain PFAS chemicals – as of February 2020, yet to be implemented.

[DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2015-SNUR.pdf?_ga=2.91446298.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520) ([https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2015-](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2015-SNUR.pdf?_ga=2.91446298.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)

[SNUR.pdf?_ga=2.91446298.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520\)](#)



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2016

EPA sets a non-enforceable “health advisory” level of 70 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water – far above what independent researchers say is safe.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT ([https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2016_LHA-](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2016_LHA-70ppt.pdf?_ga=2.58334122.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)

[70ppt.pdf?_ga=2.58334122.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2016_LHA-70ppt.pdf?_ga=2.58334122.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520))



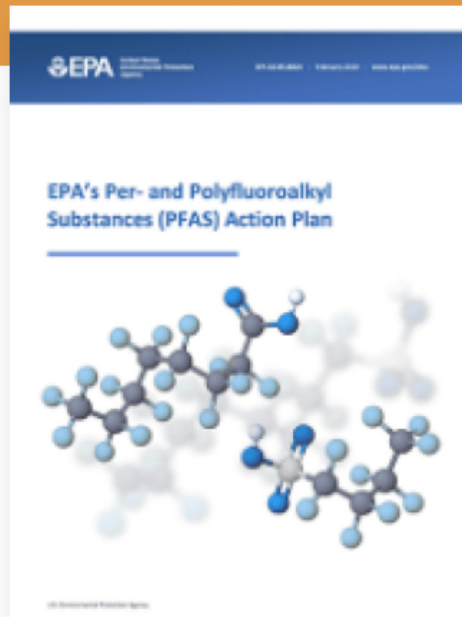
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2019

EPA issues second PFAS Action Plan.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT ([https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2019_PFAS-Action-](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2019_PFAS-Action-Plan.pdf?_ga=2.125459338.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520)

[Plan.pdf?_ga=2.125459338.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520](https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2019_PFAS-Action-Plan.pdf?_ga=2.125459338.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520))



2019

EPA misses self-assigned deadline to issue a plan to set an enforceable legal limit for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water by the end of 2019.

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[Letter.pdf?_ga=2.57695402.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520\)](#)

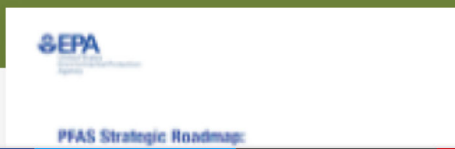


2021

EPA releases its “PFAS Roadmap,” detailing a timeline for the agency to set drinking water standards, wastewater treatment guidelines, health assessments and hazardous substance designations for several PFAS chemicals.

[DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT](#) (https://static.ewg.org/reports/2020/pfas-epa-timeline/2021_pfas-

[roadmap_final-508.pdf?_ga=2.169900192.1253861871.1649070681-2123137255.1639662520\)](#)



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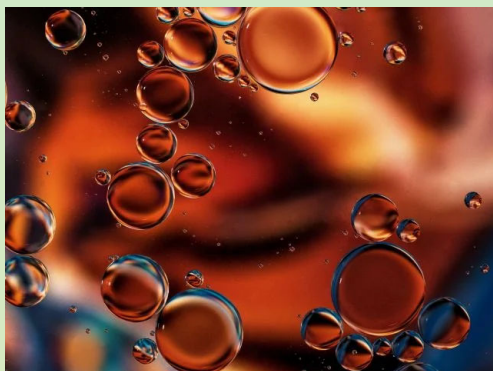
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PFAS Chemicals [\(/areas-focus/toxic-chemicals\)](/areas-focus/toxic-chemicals)

[/pfas-chemicals\)](/pfas-chemicals)

DuPont's Teflon changed our lives, but also polluted our bodies. Today, Teflon-like compounds called PFAS are found in the blood of almost all Americans. These "forever chemicals" pollute water, don't break down, and remain in the environment and people for decades.

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