

Questions:

Why wasn't the use of Ansulite foam stopped at Darwin and Townsville joint military and civil airports in 2010?

Why has Defence required Airservices use Ansulite?

What foam is stored for use at RAAF Base Tindal in Katherine?

Airservices have said negotiations are underway to move to a PFC foam, when will these conclude?

When will the foam cease to be used at Darwin and Townsville bases?

Response:

Defence statement on the use of firefighting foam Ansulite

From 2004, the Department of Defence commenced phasing out its use of legacy aqueous film forming foams (AFFF) containing PFOS and PFOA as active ingredients and progressively transitioned to a less environmentally toxic and persistent product called Ansulite for use on the Defence estate. The product currently used by Defence does not contain PFOS and PFOA as active ingredients and only contains trace elements of the chemicals.

Ansulite is only used by the Department of Defence in emergency situations where human life is at risk, or in controlled environments to test equipment. Any Ansulite used for testing is captured and treated and/or disposed of at licensed waste disposal facilities. When conducting exercises Defence undertakes simulations without foam discharge.

Defence has commissioned various comparative studies to understand the toxicity of different AFFF products. One such study conducted by the Cooperative Research Centre for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment (CRC CARE) to compare the toxicity, persistence and bioaccumulation of Ansulite and Solberg RF6, which is used at most civilian airports in Australia. The study found that in laboratory conditions Ansulite was less toxic than Solberg to all test organisms used in the study. In general, it was found that Solberg was at least 10 times more toxic than Ansulite.

Defence is working closely with Commonwealth agencies, State/Territory agencies, local governments and other relevant agencies on all matters associated with PFAS.