



RAAF Base East Sale – Environmental Investigation

About PFOS and PFOA

Aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) containing perfluorooctane (per-floo-row-ok-tane) sulfonate (sul-fon-ate) (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic (per-floo-row-ok-tan-oh-ik) acid (PFOA) was once used extensively worldwide and within Australia due to its effectiveness in fighting liquid fuel fires.

These compounds were also used across Australia and internationally in a range of common household products and specialty applications, including in the manufacture of non-stick cookware; fabric, furniture and carpet stain protection applications; food packaging and in some industrial processes.

As a result, most people living in developed nations will have levels of PFOS and PFOA in their body.

PFOS and PFOA are emerging as a concern around the world because they are persistent in the environment. They are classified as ‘emerging contaminants’ which means there is limited information known about them.

Defence no longer uses the old foams containing PFOS or PFOA as active ingredients. The AFFF product now used by Defence is more environmentally safe.



About the Investigation

The Department of Defence (Defence) is undertaking an environmental investigation at RAAF Base East Sale to investigate the extent and levels of PFOS and PFOA on, and in the vicinity of, the base.

The initial works started in May 2016 and involves taking samples of groundwater, surface water, and sediments on and off the base. The results of the sampling will provide an initial indication of whether legacy AFFF is present.

More detailed investigations will then be undertaken, building on the findings from the sampling stage. This will involve further sampling and modelling to determine the extent of PFOS and PFOA. This information will be assessed to understand potential human health and environmental risk.

Defence will liaise with other federal/state and local government agencies during the investigations.





Sampling and Testing

Sampling as part of the initial site investigation started in May 2016, with the next stage of sampling scheduled to begin in August 2016.

Sampling will include the collection of:

- on- and off-base groundwater samples
- on- and off-base surface soil samples
- surface water samples from drainage lines and the Heart Morass
- sediment samples from drainage lines and the Heart Morass

Keeping the Community Informed

Defence is committed to regularly updating the community throughout the investigation.

The project website will be updated as the investigation progresses. Community information sessions and information sheets will occur as new information is identified.

Contact



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