

# ELECTED MEMBER BRIEFING SHEET

<b>Project, activity or issue</b>	Toxic firefighting foam contamination in the Auckland region – status update	<b>2 March 2018</b>
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<b>Background</b>	<p><b>Source:</b> <a href="#">Ministry for the Environment website</a></p> <p>The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) has found levels of soil and water contamination at Ohakea (Palmerston North) and Woodbourne (Blenheim) air force bases from the historic use of specialised firefighting foam.</p> <p>A range of government agencies are working together to understand the extent of this contamination.</p> <p>Until now, the NZDF has been concentrating its investigations at bases where firefighting training has occurred and where drinking water at properties surrounding the base is taken from bores and wells – Ohakea and Woodbourne.</p> <p>Bases where firefighting training has been carried out but where the drinking-water is sourced remotely (eg Whenuapai, Hobsonville and Devonport) are the next priority for investigation.</p> <p>Research into the historical use of the former NZDF base at Hobsonville, and the remediation of the site carried out when NZDF vacated it, has cleared it as a possible source of concern for PFAS contamination.</p> <p>NZDF is now assessing Devonport Naval Base. Initial testing of soils, sediments and runoff at the Sea Safety Training Squadron has found PFAS compounds in sample sites. More testing is to be carried out to confirm those initial findings and to provide more information.</p> <p>Drinking-water on the base and in the community is sourced from Auckland city town supply and is therefore not affected.</p> <p>NZDF is starting limited testing of a tidal area, including of marine life, at Ngataranga Bay, to better understand the potential presence of PFAS in the area. This work will start early March.</p> <p>MPI says that there is no evidence or suggestion that there is a current food safety issue. MPI food safety experts will review any findings.</p> <p>Ministry of Health advice continues that there is no acute health risk.</p> <p><b>Read more:</b> <a href="#">PFAS update Cabinet paper</a></p> <p><b>PFAS and firefighting foam</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PFAS are a large group of manufactured compounds that have industrial and consumer applications. There are more than 3,000 such substances, grouped in various subclasses. PFAS is an acronym for <i>per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances</i>.</li> <li>• Some of these substances – such as PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate) and PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) – are of concern, but levels of contamination in New Zealand are expected to be low compared to other countries.</li> </ul>
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	<p><b>PFOS/PFOA in NZ</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firefighting foam manufactured with PFOS and PFOA were the standard since the 1970s until the early 2000s in international aviation because these foams put out liquid fuel fires quickly, thus improving safety for passengers, air crew and fire fighters.</li> <li>• Since 2011, no import, manufacture or use of PFOS compounds is permitted in New Zealand, other than for specified, identified uses, such as laboratory analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>Key messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This week the Auckland Council has learned that testing at the NZ Defence Force naval base sites at Devonport has returned positive contamination results for the historic use of a specialist firefighting foam.</li> <li>• Auckland Council technical officers have had an initial discussion with NZ Defence Force representatives about their preliminary test results for the Devonport naval base site and marine area.</li> <li>• The council has not been involved in this testing but has registered its interest in being kept informed on all updates by the government departments working on the issue.</li> <li>• We have asked to be kept informed about results from the next round of testing as a priority. We have also asked for an investigation methodology and timeframes so we can monitor progress.</li> <li>• Regarding the testing at Ngataranga Bay, we have been informed that some of the preliminary results are well below US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) standards for this type of contaminant.</li> <li>• We know Aucklanders that live in or regularly use this area are keen to know the impact of this chemical on public health and the environment and what, if any, precautions they should take. We encourage people to visit the Ministry for the Environment website for further information and advice.</li> <li>• More information about the investigation into Auckland sites, including advice from the Ministry of Health, is available on the Ministry for the Environment's website.</li> <li>• The Defence Force has advised that investigations are still underway at its Whenuapai base and that its former site at Hobsonville has been cleared of contamination following remediation.</li> <li>• Drinking water is not affected at the Auckland sites as all drinking water is sourced from the region's urban water supply network.</li> <li>• The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) says that there is no evidence or suggestion that there is a current food safety issue. MPI food safety experts will review any findings. Ministry of Health advice continues to be that there is no acute health risk.</li> </ul>
<b>FAQs</b>	<p><b>What role does the council play in this matter?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council's current priorities are to ensure open and informed communication is received from the central government agencies leading this work. Based on this information we will continually assess environmental and human health risks and consider what further action we may also need to take as a regulator.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On behalf of Aucklanders we will continue to seek transparent and regular communication on findings, proposed remedial action and temporary site control measures, if these are required.</li> </ul> <p><b>Has the council carried out any testing?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council is not carrying out any testing. The NZ Defence Force is responsible for undertaking the contaminated site investigation on its sites and for ensuring any required remediation occurs.</li> <li>Late last year, the council became aware through the media that there was an historical contamination issue at defence force sites, including Auckland. We have been assured by the NZ Defence Force and the Ministry for the Environment that the required independent sampling and analysis would occur for sites across the country on a prioritised basis.</li> <li>If the council became concerned about the timeliness or quality of the investigation and analysis then it could initiate its own investigation programme.</li> </ul>
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<b>Media inquiries</b>	Media inquiries can be referred to the Auckland Council media team by phoning 09 301 0101 and asking to speak to a member of the media team.
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