

Residents of Small Sussex Community Advised Not to Drink Water During Evaluation of Contaminant Near Advisory Level

DOVER (OCT. 23, 2021) – Out of an abundance of caution, the Division of Public Health (DPH) is advising residents of the Bethany Crest community near Millville to use bottled water for drinking and cooking while their water system is evaluated for a concentration of per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that is near or at a health advisory level for PFAS in drinking water.

Bethany Crest is a manufactured housing community with a small water system serving approximately 50 homes. On October 21, 2021, DPH received notice that a water sample collected on October 11 showed source water in the system serving Bethany Crest with a concentration of PFAS at 70 parts per trillion, which is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) health advisory level for these compounds in drinking water. This sample was of source water to the system, not the finished drinking water after treatment. The sample was collected as part of a proactive screening of public water sources throughout the state being conducted by the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). Two previous Bethany Crest samples in recent months had found concentrations near the advisory level, prompting repeat testing for confirmation.

The owner of the community and the operator of the water system were notified Friday and agreed to provide bottled water to residents as recommended by DPH as a precaution.

Information on the finding was being distributed to residents Friday and Saturday.

DPH and DNREC are working with the operator of the Bethany Crest water system to test the finished drinking water going to homes to determine whether current treatment methods for the system may already be reducing the PFAS levels from the source water. Samples of finished drinking water from Bethany Crest, and samples of source water from other wells in the area, will be taken this weekend and submitted to a laboratory for analysis.

DPH is evaluating the Bethany Crest treatment system and will provide technical guidance for any needed upgrades or additions to the system for reducing PFAS. DNREC is conducting an assessment to identify potential sources of the contamination and to determine if other area wells show similar PFAS levels.

PFAS are a group of man-made chemicals used in industry and consumer products. Due to their extensive use in these products over time, PFAS are found in people, wildlife, and fish and are known as “forever chemicals” because some PFAS can stay in people’s bodies a long time and cause health problems with long-term exposure.