

Palmerton Zinc Pile Superfund Site

Community Update

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, REGION 3

DELAWARE, MARYLAND, PENNSYLVANIA, VIRGINIA, WEST VIRGINIA, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Palmerton, PA

October 2025

Site Update

After the Palmerton Municipal Authority (PMA) detected per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in its municipal water supply wells in mid-2024, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tested soil, groundwater, and surface water from the Palmerton Zinc Pile Superfund site in July 2025 to check for PFAS. The results showed several PFAS compounds in most of the samples, including the areas revegetated as part of the site cleanup in the 1990s and early 2000s. Groundwater concentrations were similar to those detected in the PMA wells near the site.

Specifically, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate acid (PFOS) were detected at concentrations above EPA's 2024 Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) of 4 parts per trillion. MCL is the maximum level allowed of a contaminant in water which is delivered to any user of a public water system.

Media	Max Detection PFOS	Max Detection PFOA
Palmerton Production Wells	49.3 ppt	34.5 ppt
Site Monitoring Wells	76 ppt	43 ppt
Site Surface Water	110 ppt	41 ppt
Site Surface Soil	13,000 ppt	5 ppt

EPA is working with Palmerton Borough, PMA, and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) to develop the best strategy to ensure Palmerton community members have long-term access to safe drinking water.

Next Steps

On Oct. 27, 2025, EPA authorized the installation of a groundwater treatment system at the location of PMA production wells. This treatment system will reduce PFAS levels to below federal MCLs prior to distribution to Palmerton community members currently serviced by PMA. This system will be implemented under EPA's Superfund Removal program and is expected to be operational by mid-2026.

EPA will continue investigating site-related PFAS contamination to determine any additional sources of PFAS and the extent of the impacts, which will include testing private drinking water wells for PFAS, throughout the rest of 2025 and into 2026.

EPA will announce the date and time of a public meeting to discuss this information once details are finalized and the current lapse in appropriations is resolved. Updates will be shared via a mailed fact sheet and email. Sign up for the email list by sending a request to R3-Palmerton@epa.gov, or visit the Palmerton Zinc Pile Superfund site profile page at www.epa.gov/superfund/palmerton.

Background

The Superfund site is located in Palmerton Borough, Carbon County, Pennsylvania, in a narrow valley bounded by Stony Ridge to the north and Blue Mountain to the south. From 1898 to 1981, two zinc smelters operated and emitted dust and particulates containing lead, cadmium, zinc, and arsenic. Nearly 90 years of metal particulate deposition accumulated in the surrounding area soils, which created an environment that was toxic to vegetation. As the soil became toxic, vegetation started dying and eventually the north slope of nearby Blue Mountain became devoid of almost all soil and vegetation.

EPA selected the cleanup plan to revegetate Blue Mountain in 1987. The first phase of revegetation occurred between 1991 and 1996 with portions of the mountain receiving a limestone, potash, sludge and fly ash mixture along with grass and tree seeds. The impacted portion of Blue Mountain is now almost completely revegetated. The presence of PFAS in the PMA production wells in 2024 led EPA to test for PFAS at the site, including in the remediation areas, where PFAS was found.

Resources

EPA has developed additional information on PFAS and ways that people can reduce PFAS in their own drinking water, which can be viewed by visiting the following links or scanning the QR code.

<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-04/water-filter-fact-sheet.pdf>



<https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas>

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has detailed information about potential health risks from PFAS, which can be viewed by visiting the following link or scanning the QR code.

www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/index.html



PADEP has additional information and guidance on PFAS, which can be viewed by visiting the following links or scanning the QR code.

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/water/bureau-of-safe-drinking-water/pfas>



Questions? Please Contact Us: R3-Palmerton@epa.gov

Please note that while responses may be delayed, the site team will address inquiries as soon as possible.

Joshua Barber

EPA Remedial Project Manager
215-814-3393

Eric Pollard

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
215-814-5535

Augusta Mery

EPA Remedial Project Manager
215-814-3230

Myles Bartos

EPA On Scene Coordinator
215-814-3342