

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL'S GUIDE TO

Addressing PFAS Concerns in Water

A Practical Guide for Industrial Facilities
and Construction Contractors

Global Environmental
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PFAS was found. Here's what that means for your property.

Across Michigan and the Midwest, Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are increasingly being identified during environmental investigations, redevelopment projects, and facility compliance reviews. As regulatory standards continue to evolve, and laboratory detection limits become more refined, sites that once appeared at low risk are now generating new data and new questions.

For industrial facilities and construction teams, the discovery often occurs during:

- Phase II environmental assessments
- Construction dewatering activities
- Facility discharge monitoring
- Regulatory sampling initiatives

When PFAS appears in a lab report, the reaction is understandable. Concerns about liability, cost, and schedule surface quickly.

- What does this mean for the project?
- Will construction stop?
- Is cleanup inevitable?

The reality is often more measured than the initial response suggests.

The presence of PFAS does not automatically mean full-site remediation or project shutdown. In many cases, the issue centers on whether contaminated water is being discharged or otherwise triggering regulatory requirements. When discharge pathways are properly controlled, projects frequently proceed without significant disruption. This guide outlines what to evaluate when treatment is required and how to move forward with a practical strategy focused on compliance, cost control, and project continuity.





Step 01: Clarify the situation

Before assuming worst-case scenarios, gather the essential facts.

- Is water being pumped or discharged?
- What PFAS compounds were detected?
- Are there any other contaminants of concern?
- Are levels above applicable discharge criteria (EGLE, NPDES, or local municipal sewer limits)?
- Has a regulatory agency issued formal direction?

The mere presence of PFAS does not determine the response.

The regulatory trigger typically relates to:

- Water discharge
- Permit compliance

If contaminated water is actively being pumped and discharged, treatment may be required to meet discharge limits. If PFAS is detected but not discharged, treatment may not be required at this stage.

Understanding this distinction early keeps the focus on practical next steps.





Step 02: When Treatment Is Required

Treatment becomes necessary when discharge limits must be met during construction or facility operations:

- Water is discharged during construction dewatering
- A facility discharges to a sanitary sewer or surface water
- Regulatory authorities require interim control measures

At that point, the objective becomes straightforward: [Control the water. Maintain compliance. Keep the project moving.](#)

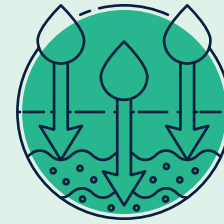
PFAS treatment typically involves:

Granular Activated Carbon (GAC)

GAC remains the most widely used method for PFAS reduction in discharge applications. It is adaptable, scalable, and effective for a range of flow rates and concentrations.

Ion Exchange Resin

Ion exchange systems may be used when higher removal efficiency is needed or when polishing effluent to meet more stringent discharge limits. Ion exchange resins require higher upfront costs and are typically preferred for systems operating over extended durations.



SPECIALTY MEDIA

Depending on site conditions, additional media types may be incorporated into a modular treatment system.



Treatment systems can be configured as:

- Trailer-mounted systems for rapid mobilization
 - Skid-mounted units for limited work areas
- Temporary systems for construction projects
- Long-term systems for facility operations

System selection depends on:

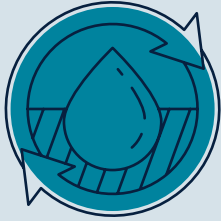
- Flow rate
- Influent concentration
- Applicable discharge criteria
- Project timeline

With a well-designed treatment system, most projects proceed without interruption.





Common PFAS Scenarios



During Property Transfer or Redevelopment

PFAS may be identified during due diligence sampling.

Primary concerns typically include liability, financial exposure, and whether discharge must be controlled. When treatment is feasible and manageable, projects often proceed with a defined strategy.



During Construction Dewatering

PFAS is detected in groundwater being pumped for excavation, utilities, or foundation work.

The primary concern is the impact on the project schedule. Mobile treatment systems can be deployed quickly, allowing dewatering to continue while meeting discharge limits. Early coordination significantly reduces the risk of delay.



Following Regulatory Notification

A facility receives notice of PFAS exceedances.

The priority becomes determined whether immediate discharge control is required and developing a compliance strategy. Regulators typically seek documented action and responsible management. A defined treatment plan provides both clarity and control.

A Practical PFAS Action Checklist

Before moving forward, confirm the following:

- Is contaminated water being discharged?
- Are PFAS levels greater than applicable discharge limits?
- What is the maximum pumping or discharge rate?
- Have you confirmed applicable permit requirements?
- Is a treatment system necessary to maintain compliance?

If any of these conditions apply, it is time to develop a treatment strategy.





Moving Forward

PFAS discoveries can feel disruptive, particularly when timelines and financial exposure are involved. In most cases, however, the path forward becomes clear once discharge obligations and regulatory requirements are defined.

When contaminated water is properly controlled, projects move ahead. Construction continues. Facilities operate within compliance.

Treatment decisions are driven by flow rate, concentration, discharge limits, and duration of operation. When those variables are addressed directly, PFAS becomes a manageable condition rather than an uncertain liability.

Global Environmental works alongside property owners, contractors, and operators to implement treatment systems that meet regulatory standards while supporting project continuity. From mobile PFAS treatment systems and carbon media supply to system operation and discharge coordination, our focus remains on delivering controlled, reliable solutions.

PFAS does not have to stall progress. With a defined treatment strategy in place, it can be addressed responsibly and with confidence.

Addressing groundwater discharge during construction?

PFAS is just one of several contaminants that can impact dewatering operations. For a broader look at managing contaminated groundwater on active construction sites, including permitting, system design, and compliance monitoring, explore our companion resource [Treating Groundwater Contamination on Construction Sites: A Step-by-Step Guide for Construction Professionals](#).

Need a treatment strategy?

See how Global Environmental can improve your environmental performance, reduce long-term costs, and ensure compliance with confidence.

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