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PFAS and Biosolids

Metro Vancouver's biosolids are used across BC to restore land, create healthy soil, and bring vegetation back to life. Substances found in many items that are part of our daily lives can also be found in biosolids.

What Are Biosolids?

Biosolids are a nutrient-rich fertilizer made of organic matter recovered from advanced wastewater treatment.

Biosolids are treated at high heat and broken down by microorganisms to eliminate harmful bacteria and reduce odours. The end result is a rich, earthlike product that can be directly applied to land as a fertilizer or used as an ingredient to build soil.

Metro Vancouver's biosolids, known as "Nutrifor", have been used safely and responsibly across BC since 1991.

PFAS Are Part of Our Daily Lives

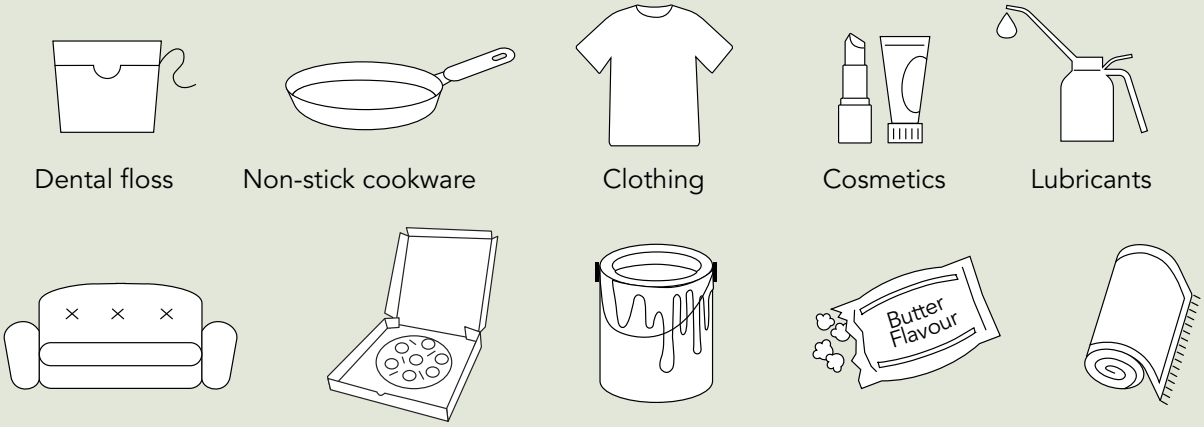
Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly known as "PFAS", are a wide range of human-made chemicals that have existed since the 1940s.

PFAS are in many items that we use in our daily lives. They can be found in food packaging, non-stick cookware, stain and water-repellant fabrics, cleaning products, dental floss, and cosmetics.

People are exposed to PFAS through foods, household dust, and products containing PFAS. They can also be exposed when they use products made with PFAS or packaged in materials that contain PFAS.

PFAS do not break down easily in the environment and are ever-present around the world. They are in most soils, sediments, and water.

Products with PFAS



Dental floss | Non-stick cookware | Clothing | Cosmetics | Lubricants

Furniture | Pizza boxes | Paint | Microwaveable popcorn bags | Carpets

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Are PFAS in Biosolids?

Because they are prevalent in our daily lives, PFAS are found in trace amounts in our bodies, our environment, our wastewater, and in biosolids.

Wastewater treatment plants do not use or produce PFAS, but they can receive these compounds in wastewater from industry and residents.

Not all biosolids are the same — their quality reflects what the community sends down its drains. As long as PFAS are part of products that we use in our everyday lives, they will continue to be found in wastewater and biosolids.

Reducing and eliminating PFAS use at the source is the best way to keep them out of our water, air, soil, and the products we use.

What Is the Exposure Risk of PFAS in Biosolids?

Studies show that our exposure to PFAS from common household products is far greater than our exposure to the trace amount of PFAS found in most biosolids.

Regions that receive wastewater from industries that manufacture or use large amounts of PFAS compounds can have elevated levels of PFAS in their biosolids. Metro Vancouver's wastewater treatment plants do not receive these large inputs of PFAS in their wastewater.

Metro Vancouver PFAS testing shows that levels in its biosolids are consistently lower than the Canadian Soil Quality Guidelines limits.

What Is Metro Vancouver Doing?

Metro Vancouver continues to stay current with the available science to ensure the safety and quality of its biosolids.

Metro Vancouver:

- Has a rigorous quality control program and regularly tests its biosolids for PFAS and other compounds
- Conducts research to ensure the ongoing safety of its projects and to improve its operations
- Continues to stay current with the latest science to ensure that it produces safe, high-quality biosolids

What Can You Do?

Removing PFAS at the source is the most effective way to reduce their presence in wastewater and biosolids.

To reduce your exposure and the amount of PFAS in your home:

- Buy PFAS-free products
- Avoid products marketed as stain and water resistant
- Avoid non-stick cookware (try a cast iron pan instead)

Learn more

Reduce Your Exposure to PFAS
(WA State Department of Ecology)

PFAS Fact Sheet
(California Association of Sanitation Agencies)