

Adelaide Airport PFAS Investigation - Off Airport Results

Background

Airservices has been conducting investigations at Adelaide Airport relating to the historical use by Airservices of PFAS containing fire-fighting foam on the airport. PFASs are ingredients in some common domestic products such as paints, dishwasher rinse aids, and textile treatments (water proofing, stain prevention) along with certain types of firefighting foam called AFFF (aqueous film forming foams) that were used previously by Airservices in firefighting activities. Since 2010, the firefighting foam carried by Airservices at Adelaide Airport has not contained PFAS.

Investigations on the Airport have generally shown low levels of PFAS at the airport boundaries. During the most recent monitoring event on airport, in October 2018, however, the level of PFAS detected at the western boundary of the airport had increased slightly. This led to Airservices taking a precautionary approach and conducting targeted off site sampling on public land adjacent to the western boundary. In addition, a survey of residents adjacent to the western boundary of the airport regarding their use of groundwater was conducted to assist in determining future actions should further environmental investigations need to be undertaken in the area.

In addition, Airservices investigated stormwater run-off from the airport that ran into the waters of Patawalonga Lake and as part of this Airservices assessed the Barcoo stormwater reservoir.

Investigation results

The recent off-airport investigation work, conducted by GHD Pty Ltd from November 2018 to March 2019, saw soil, surface water and shallow groundwater samples taken from five wells installed on public land. Of the five wells sampled, three were well below the National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP) human health guidance values for site investigations. Two samples recorded PFAS concentrations just above the NEMP human health guidance values for drinking water but were below the value for the NEMP recreational water use. However, residents in this area are all mains supplied for their drinking water.

The recent groundwater survey shows that the small number of bore water users in the investigation area only use groundwater for watering lawns and residents should note SA Health advice that “the use of shallow bore water is not recommended because of the high likelihood of chemical or microbial contamination.”

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/protecting+public+health/water+quality/bore+water>

Residents should also note that SA Water has advised that it does not have any drinking water catchments near Adelaide Airport and water from its reticulated system remains safe to drink.

The investigations in the stormwater system off the airport found that there was not a complete pathway for PFAS in stormwater from the airport to Patawalonga Lake. Results were detected in the Barcoo above drinking water level but GHD Pty Ltd noted this is not considered a risk because the Barcoo is a stormwater reservoir.

Next steps

Airservices has shared the results with Adelaide Airport, Environment Protection Authority South Australia, the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, SA Water and SA Health, and we will continue to work with these organisations to determine appropriate next steps. Airservices has also briefed the Adelaide Airport Consultative Committee on its investigations. For privacy reasons, Airservices will not publish any details of those who participated in the survey.

More information

Airservices will continue to keep the community informed and has published copy of the latest report in relation to Adelaide Airport Off Airport Results on Airservices Australia website. For further information on PFAS and the latest investigation results, the following is available:

- Contact the Airservices project team by email on: pfascomms@AirservicesAustralia.com A report on this investigation will be available on the Airservices website: <http://www.airservicesaustralia.com/environment/national-pfas-management-program/>
- Residents should note that SA Water has advised that it does not have any drinking water catchments near Adelaide Airport and water from its reticulated system remains safe to drink.
- Additional information can also be found on the SA Health website: <http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/protecting+public+health/water+quality/bore+water>
- Information can also be obtained from the Commonwealth PFAS website www.pfas.gov.au/ and the Commonwealth Department of Health website: www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas.htm