ISSUE BRIEF

National Waste & Recycling Association℠
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Overview of PFAS in the Air

As discussed in more detail in our "Fact Sheet on PFAS," per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are ubiquitous in households, consumer products, food, and the environment. Much of the legislation, regulation, and research to date has focused on addressing the health impacts related to PFAS exposure in drinking water; however, there is growing interest in understanding the impacts of PFAS exposure in other media, including air. NWRA has prepared the following information, albeit limited, on the current understanding of PFAS in air:

- The currently understood most common exposure pathway to significant levels of PFAS is from drinking water that is impacted by high-concentration source areas associated with firefighting foam or industrial facilities. PFAS can enter other media (e.g. surface water and air) through emissions from various manufacturing and industrial processes.
- Landfills generate gas through the decomposition of common organic material routinely contained in many wastes. Because of the presence of PFAS in the various waste streams, landfill gas may contain detectable levels of PFAS.
- Science is still developing to understand the fate, exposure, and toxicity of PFAS from various environmental media. Analytical methods and toxicology studies of many PFAS of interest are still in development (or have not been initiated) for media other than drinking water, including air.
- Research on levels of PFAS in the air near landfills is sparse, with no existing published data available on U.S. facilities. The limited studies available, however, suggest that indoor air generally has much higher concentrations of PFAS compared with outdoor air.
- Given the relatively low volatility of most PFAS compounds and the emission controls at many landfills, it is expected that potential exposures from PFAS associated with outdoor air at landfills is not a significant exposure pathway relative to exposure from drinking water or indoor air.

Landfill operators should stay informed of developments in research and regulations that could impact operations, environmental compliance obligations, and potential health impacts of PFAS in outdoor air.

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