

Faces of PFAS Contamination

PFAS: Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a class of chemicals used to make products stain proof, water resistant, and nonstick. Toxic even at low levels, these chemicals increase risk of cancers, immunosuppression, liver disease and much more.

When products containing PFAS are manufactured and disposed of, PFAS seeps into the soil, groundwater and drinking water. According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP), at least [171 public water systems](#) in 96 cities and towns, and many private wells, have exceeded the state's legal limit for PFAS.

To protect public health, we must ban the use of toxic PFAS. Below are a few testimonials of those impacted by PFAS contamination.



Christopher Cerasuolo is a dad, husband, software architect, and a resident of Westminster for more than 20 years. In 2022, Cerasuolo learned through a neighbor that his private well contained more than double the state limit for PFAS contamination. This contamination was traced to a fertilizer company located 3,500 feet from his home. Private wells from more than 200 households and businesses in Westminster, a small town of 8,900 residents, have been contaminated with PFAS. Cerasuolo and many others had been drinking dangerously toxic water for years, putting their health at risk.



Captain Nate Barber, a Nantucket firefighter, was diagnosed with testicular cancer several years ago. During his treatment, Barber discovered that the personal protective equipment (PPE) he had been wearing contained PFAS. After his treatment, Barber tried to acquire PFAS-free uniforms for his fellow firefighters, only to find that it was not possible. PFAS are linked to many different types of cancers, and are not only found in firefighters' PPE, but also in the foam they use.



Meg Ruley is a resident of Nantucket, where her family has been for generations. In July 2023, Ruley was sent a letter from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, asking her to test her well. She was concerned to find that her well had PFAS above 20 parts per trillion (ppt), the Maximum Contaminant Level in Massachusetts. She tested her water again in March 2024 and the amount of PFAS had increased to 90 ppt. Ruley was one of many residents in the area to find high PFAS levels in their wells, with one well testing at 900 ppt.



Jason Burns, a resident of Fall River, has been a firefighter since 2006. Throughout his career, Burns has been an outspoken advocate for better working conditions for his fellow firefighters, which has led to improvements in equipment, training, education, cancer prevention, behavioral health and wellness. Burns' advocacy has turned to fighting PFAS, which is found in firefighters' PPE and the foam they use. Firefighters are put at extreme risk from wearing and using these chemicals in their job.



Dr. Anne Lutz, a child psychiatrist and avid gardener, is one of hundreds of residents of Westminister who has dealt with the effects of PFAS contamination, believed to have been caused by a local compost facility. More than 200 private wells have been contaminated in Westminister, some of them testing at [300 times](#) the state maximum level of 20ppt, the highest PFAS levels found in the state. A [March 2023 site investigation](#) at the Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer Company found the levels of PFAS in the well water was 4,916 ppt, 359,000 ppt in the soil, and 48,330 ppt in the groundwater. The story of PFAS contamination in Westminister was [featured](#) in a front page story by David Abel in the Boston Globe on July 6, 2022.



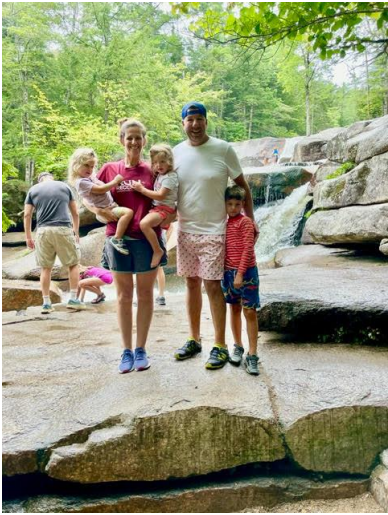
Joanne Skokan works at the Historical Nantucket Pharmacy on Nantucket. Skokan's family has owned land on the island for generations, split between her, her siblings, and her cousins. Last July, Skokan received a request from DEP to test her well, with the results showing PFAS contamination with over 100 ppt. Other houses tested on her street came back with similar results, including some that were over 600 ppt. Skokan and her family now have to deal with the effects of contamination for themselves and their children.



Olivia Sousa, originally from Norton, recently graduated from the American International College in Springfield, MA. She has played soccer for 15 years, including throughout college. There have been [recent reports](#) of athletes facing increased health risk from playing on artificial turf. [In a recent post](#), Sousa not only grappled with the potential effects of exposure due to having played on these fields for most of her life, but also the concern of PFAS entering open wounds, which are common to get on artificial turf. Sousa worries about the wide ranging health effects, for herself and for athletes and future competitors who will have to play on these types of surfaces.



Town Administrator Connor Read led a comprehensive PFAS mitigation strategy in Easton, where routine well testing in the community of 25,000 revealed PFAS levels above 20 ppt, the state maximum contaminant level for PFAS. In the years since, Easton has designed and constructed three PFAS water treatment plants to comply with the MassDEP PFAS water standards at significant cost. Read is a leading voice for municipalities advocating for a comprehensive statewide approach to the regulation and mitigation of PFAS in public water supplies and served as the Massachusetts Municipal Association's (MMA) representative on the Massachusetts PFAS Interagency Task Force.



Meredith Lepore is a mother of three, wife, and nurse practitioner living on Nantucket, where she has resided for majority of her life. In August 2020, Lepore discovered that her family's well was found to have high concentration of PFAS at 36 ppt. The contamination was traced back to Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) used to extinguish fires from the airport located near Lepore's house. Many of her neighbors also have dangerously high levels of PFAS in their drinking water. This news was horrifying for Lepore and her husband, not only for their health, but their children's as well. Lepore has been diagnosed with thyroid nodules, and her husband suffered GI issues that only cleared up after they were given clean water. Her 7 year old son had influenza twice, despite being vaccinated. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) [reports](#) exposure to PFAS lowers antibody response to vaccines in children and increases the risk of thyroid cancer.



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