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PENNSYLVANIA

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 8, 2016

Mr. Pete Potochney
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for
Energy, Installations, and Environment
3400 Defense Pentagon
Room 3B856A
Washington, DC 20301-3400

Dear Mr. Potochney:

I write to ask for your attention to reports of chemicals being found in water near military installations where a specific firefighting foam was used. Specifically, I ask that you direct all the services to expeditiously implement a program to test drinking water sources near relevant sites, inform residents of any contamination, and begin remediation efforts. I also ask that you accelerate initiatives to develop new, effective methods of fire suppression that do not have the potential for adverse effects on human health and the environment.

It is my understanding that in 2014, Mr. Donald R. Schregardus, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Environment, issued a memo identifying Perfluorinated Compounds (PFCs) as an emerging environmental issue for the Navy. DOD uses a foam for firefighting that contains PFCs. Specifically, two PFCs, perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), were identified as having sufficient toxicological information to merit consideration for cleanup and water safety remediation efforts. The memo also directed the identification of all known and suspected sites where PFOS and PFOA may have been released and the sampling of drinking water systems that might have been effected by PFOS and PFOA contamination.

I appreciate that the Navy is working to identify installations and communities that may be affected by PFC release and to remediate contamination of the local drinking water systems. My staff recently received a detailed briefing from Navy subject matter experts regarding the sampling and remediation efforts being undertaken at and around the Willow Grove Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NASJRB) in Horsham, Pennsylvania and the Naval Air Development Center (NADC) in Warminster, Pennsylvania. It is important that the Navy partner closely with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and local authorities to effectively communicate with local residents about the contamination and to fully implement remediation measures in a timely fashion.

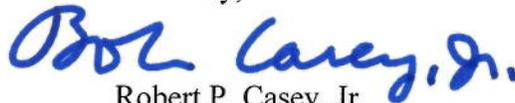
I was concerned to learn that at least six other installations or former installations in Pennsylvania were identified on a FY14 list of fire or crash training sites across the nation where the firefighting foam with PFCs may have been released. It is my understanding that sites managed by the Navy, Air Force, and Army are all affected.

All services should take steps to evaluate the extent of PFOS and PFOA contamination around relevant sites, communicate with employees and residents about the potential health risks, and provide alternative drinking water in areas where PFC levels are identified as above the EPA Provisional Health Advisory levels. I request that you provide an update on the status of DOD-wide guidance regarding these chemical contaminants and request that you direct each service to make available to the public information regarding sites currently under evaluation or undergoing remediation. Transparent, frequent, and timely communication with facility employees and local residents is critical.

It is my understanding that firefighting foam with PFCs is still in use and being stored at DOD facilities in the United States. I appreciate the need for all services to have the capability to extinguish fires quickly and effectively. I urge that you accelerate the development of a new fire extinguishing agent that meets the operational and training needs of all services without the risk of PFC or other contamination that could affect human health. I also ask that you provide to my office the DOD guidance regarding the storage and disposal of the firefighting foam in current use. In the case of the NASJRB and NADC sites in Pennsylvania, PFOA and PFOS cleanup has proven costly and time-consuming for the Navy, as well as caused significant concern in the local community. This can be prevented in the future by providing for the safe storage and disposal of fire extinguishing agents containing PFCs.

I stand ready to work with your office on this important matter and to communicate with Pennsylvanians about the steps that DOD is taking to address this problem. Please feel free to contact me at 202-228-5098 or through my staff point of contact for this matter, Caitlin Gearen Frazer (caitlin_frazer@casey.senate.gov). Thank you for your attention to my concerns and for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Casey, Jr." in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator