



Tustin, California's New State-Funded Water Treatment System to Eliminate PFAS From Drinking Water

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Facing federal government plans to weaken regulation of “forever chemicals” in drinking water, Tustin’s Governor, Gavin Newsom, announced the city received a new, state-funded water treatment system designed to remove per- and polyfluoroalkyl compounds (PFAS).

PFAS constitute a family of 12,000+ different man-made fluorinated chemicals that have been used in various commercial and industrial applications since the 1950s. Because of their persistence and mobility, PFAS have garnered recent attention and concerns have been raised concerning potential human health and environmental effects associated with certain types of PFAS.

California’s State Water Board Chair, E. Joaquin Esquivel, commented on the recent recognition of PFAS as a threat to public health and noted that increased data substantiated the need to eliminate “forever chemicals” from drinking water. As such, Esquivel claims the board is moving quickly to support projects that target this issue.

In the past three years, California has received \$269 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for its Drinking Water State Revolving Fund allocation to help public water systems, like Tustin, remove PFAS and other contaminants from its drinking water. The \$29.5 million water treatment system received a \$10 million grant from the State Revolving Fund, a federal-state partnership to help finance public water systems drinking water projects. The same project also received \$11.5 in additional federal funding.

Tustin’s new water treatment system is one of seven marshaled by the Orange County Water District to address PFAS in Orange County’s drinking water. The board has allocated a total of \$28.5 million from the State Revolving fund to support the other six projects, which are all either complete or near completion.

The board is also investigating and monitoring the presence of PFAS in water systems and groundwater throughout California. California’s State Water Board previously issued protective health-based notification levels (NLs) and response levels (RLs) for PFAS in drinking water, specifically PFBS, PFHxS, PFOS, and PFOA. In 2024, the board expanded testing for PFAS to about 4,000 wells in disadvantaged communities and plans to track PFAS contamination and assist with the development of water treatment strategies.

Due to increased concerns regarding PFAS and potential environmental and human health effects, federal, state, and local agencies are continuously evolving regulatory standards and guidelines. As research efforts and findings are continuously evolving, it is imperative to keep abreast of these developments to ensure compliance and maintain best practices.