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TRSA Meets with EPA Regarding PFAS and Microfiber

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TRSA representatives recently met with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Science and Technology (OST) to discuss the risks and regulatory activity pertaining to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, and microfibers. The U.S. EPA OST is responsible for working with stakeholders to develop national economically and technologically achievable performance standards to address water pollution from industry.

PFAS has quickly moved to the top of TRSA's legislative agenda as members in Michigan began receiving notices requiring testing for effluent PFAS levels in water discharge. The discussion, led by Rob Wood, director, engineering and analysis division, OST; TRSA President and CEO Joseph Ricci; and Vice President of Government Relations Kevin Schwalb, focused on the EPA's PFAS Action Plan and the establishment of open communications between industry and the agency to enhance understanding and cooperation of these issues.

"TRSA has a 25-year cooperative relationship with the EPA beginning with the Clean Water Act," Ricci said. "That has led to industry-led initiatives to reduce water and energy consumption, implement wastewater treatment, and voluntarily eliminate nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs) from detergents. We intend to continue this positive industry-agency collaboration by maintaining open communications to assist in the development and implementation of practical measures to reduce the risks associated with potential discharge of PFAS from items processed by commercial laundries."

While the health effects of PFAS in drinking water have been documented, there are between 4,000 to 5,000 compounds identified as PFAS with more than 600 registered as toxins and "there is a lot of work yet to be done," said Wood, noting that government and industry need to develop a "systematic approach" to legislative and regulatory processes such as establishing analytic methods and protocols for testing, as well as the economic impact of potential treatments.

There are nearly a dozen bills in Congress addressing PFAS, including several amendments to the National Defense Appropriations Act that includes millions for water contaminated from perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) chemicals. The Trump administration has threatened to veto the bill with the amendment based on its strong objections to provisions authorizing the Department of Defense to treat water sources or provide replacement water for agricultural purposes where the water source is "contaminated" with PFOA and PFOS from military activities. PFAS compounds have been used in fire-fighting foams and other fire-resistant materials. The House was expected to take up an amendment from Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH) that would require the EPA to test for and set standards for the chemicals. Information regarding the EPA PFAS Action Plan can be found [here](#).

TRSA also raised the issue of microfibers, which has yet to reach levels of discussion within the EPA noting that there is "a need to gain a greater understanding of the risks, while recognizing that there are many research gaps needing to be addressed and scientific uncertainties existing around microfiber risk management." The EPA is implementing a microfiber working group, of which TRSA will be a participating member.

Also participating on behalf of the EPA were Marcus Zobrist, chief, industrial branch, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), National Pretreatment Program; as well as Jesse Pritts, Jan Pickrell and Brian Damico.



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