

PFAS LEVELS EXPECTED IN TUNNEL SOIL

KEY POINTS

- Soil excavated to dig the West Gate Tunnel is expected to have low levels of PFAS.
- We can safely manage the soil under guidelines provided by the Environment Protection Authority Victoria.
- PFAS are widely used in a range of everyday products like nonstick cookware, cosmetics and sunscreen.
- Most people are exposed to small amounts of PFAS every day in dust, air, food, water and contact with consumer products containing these chemicals.
- The Victorian Government has a strong track record of taking a conservative, safety focused approach to the management of PFAS.

0.01 micrograms of PFAS per litre

2

micrograms of PFAS per litre

0.07

micrograms of PFAS per litre

0-0.7

micrograms of PFAS per litre



Drinking water guidelines



Anticipated levels in West Gate Tunnel ground water



Safe for community use of rivers, lakes and coastal waters

What are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are manufactured chemicals, used in many household products like non-stick cookware, cosmetics and sunscreens, and industrial products like firefighting foams.

Why are PFAS an issue for the West Gate Tunnel Project?

Initial testing shows low levels of PFAS can be expected when tunneling starts, which has triggered preventative measures. Finding contaminants in soil unearthed during major infrastructure construction is common, especially around former and existing industrial and commercial sites. We are able to manage the soil safely under guidelines provided by the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA Victoria).

How much PFAS is expected to be in the tunnel soil?

Testing shows the levels of PFAS expected to be found during tunnel boring are low and at safe levels for the community and the environment.

Groundwater testing along the tunnel alignment shows PFAS levels of between zero and 0.7 micrograms per litre or less, which is between detectable limits and much less than water that is safe to swim in.

How will the community be protected once the soil is taken to Hi-Quality?

The Hi-Quality disposal site has been rigorously assessed to ensure all environmental issues are addressed. This includes groundwater and surface water quality, air quality, and noise.

The site will be purpose built for the job and engineered to take a much higher level of contaminated soil than what is expected to be found.

Hi-Quality Sunbury was chosen as the preferred site by Transurban's builder CPB John Holland Joint Venture following a comprehensive assessment of three potential sites as part of its tender.

How common is PFAS?

The Environment Protection Authority has undertaken research which shows there are low levels of PFAS present across most populated or industrialised areas. This is because PFAS are present in common household and industrial products.

Can PFAS affect my health?

There is no consistent evidence that PFAS are harmful to human health, or cause any specific illnesses, even in the case of highly exposed occupational populations. While recent studies show people's exposure to PFAS in the general environment is reducing we still don't know everything about how PFAS affects human health.

This is why the EPA takes a precautionary approach and advises Victorians to take care and reduce their exposure to PFAS.

For the West Gate Tunnel Project those precautions include having specially engineered and lined containment bays to protect ground and surface waters, and removing the water from the soil and treating it to drinking water quality.

Where can I find out more about PFAS?

Commonwealth and State government agencies are developing online resources detailing the latest understanding, approach and advice about PFAS.

They include:

Australian Government PFAS website
<https://www.pfas.gov.au>

Australian Government Department of Health website
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas.htm>

EPA Victoria <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/environmental-information/pfas>

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