



Contact:

Tiffany Van Horn, Vice President

P.O. Box 80370

Fairbanks, AK 99708

Phone: 907-479-3118

Email: tiffany@akwater.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

5/30/2019

Compost Program Suspends Sales After PFOS/PFOA Detected

In conjunction with the ADEC, Utility Erring on the Side of Caution and suspending compost sales

FAIRBANKS, AK –The compost processed and sold annually by Golden Heart Utilities Inc. will not be available to customers this season. The Utility continues to believe in the benefits of biosolid recycling; however, PFOS and PFOA have been detected in the compost. Even though there is no official guidance on the safe levels of these substances in compost, the Utility is erring on the side of caution and suspending sales. The Utility's compost has always met or exceeded compliance with EPA biosolids regulations and ADEC permit requirements.

PFOS and PFOA have been in the news from coast to coast for their appearance in groundwater, typically surrounding airports and military bases where the fire fighting agents used to extinguish fires can contain these compounds. These compounds are also commonly found in household dust and the foods we eat, having been used since the 1950s in stain resistant carpets and fabrics, food packaging, non-stick cookware, and rainproof outerwear. A voluntary phase out of these compounds by manufacturers and processors in the US began in 2006, but they are very persistent in the environment and may also be present in products imported from other countries.

Golden Heart Utilities does not use PFOS or PFOA in its operations. PFOS and PFOA are generated in the homes and businesses the Utility proudly serves. Point sources such as firefighting foams and nonpoint domestic sources release PFOS and PFOA into our environment when products are made, used, or discarded.

Long considered a success story for the interior of Alaska, the composting program has been a community asset for a number of years, recycling biosolids from the wastewater treatment process to produce ADEC and EPA-recognized Exceptional Quality Class A compost. More than half of the biosolids produced in the United States is used to improve soil through programs like this one. Biosolids compost can provide valuable nutrients to help sustain lawns and gardens, and programs like these have been featured and demonstrated by the National Park Service, US Department of Agriculture, and other agencies as a beneficial community service.

The EPA's PFAS Action Plan reports that the EPA is in the early scoping stages of risk assessment for PFOA and PFAS in biosolids to better understand implications and if there are any potential risks. While uncertainty surrounds the question of human PFAS exposure from biosolids and risk assessments by some states (such as Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont) have reported that direct contact, inhalation, or ingestion of typical biosolids and other recycled residuals pose no significant health risk, including from the traces of PFOS or PFOA they contain the Utility, however, is erring on the side of caution at this time. Golden Heart recognizes that our community values the compost and apologizes for any inconvenience that this decision may cause.

More info on PFOS and PFOA can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/basic-information-pfas>. Questions regarding potential public risk and health concerns due to PFOS and PFOA should be directed to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services or might be answered at the agency's website at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/eph/Pages/PFAS.aspx>.

###



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

Department of Environmental
Conservation

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

P.O. Box 111800
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1800
Main: 907.465.5066
Fax: 907.465.5070

May 24, 2019

Oran Paul, President
Golden Heart Utilities
P.O. Box 80370
Fairbanks, AK 99708-0370

Dear Mr. Paul:

I want to commend Golden Heart Utilities (GHU) for its environmental stewardship in managing the sewage sludge generated in Fairbanks and processed at its treatment plant and composting facility. GHU proactively conducted sampling and analysis for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) after becoming aware of environmental concerns over potential PFAS accumulation.

The sample results show that currently stockpiled compost contains PFOS and PFOA at levels above the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) migration-to-groundwater based soil cleanup levels. DEC agrees with GHU's decision to stop providing compost to the public in order to minimize the migration of PFAS into soil and groundwater.

While it is unknown if GHU's previously distributed compost contained concerning levels of PFAS, the sustained use of large amounts of PFAS-contaminated compost could have potential groundwater impacts, especially in areas with shallow groundwater. Residents who have used the compost and are concerned about potential groundwater impacts can find information on how to test for PFAS on DEC's webpage (<http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/pfas/fact-sheets/>). There are readily available technologies that can remove PFAS from drinking water, including carbon filtration, reverse osmosis, and other methods. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services website also has information about the potential health risks of PFAS exposure (<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/eph/Pages/PFAS.aspx>).

The Department intends to work closely with GHU on alternative storage, treatment, or disposal options for the sewage sludge and biosolids that are existing now or may be accumulated or produced in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason W. Brune".

Jason W. Brune
Commissioner

cc: Adam Crum, Commissioner, DHSS