www.airservicesaustralia.com

Perth Airport and fire fighting foam

Airservices role at Perth Airport

Airservices Australia is a government-owned organisation established in 1995 to provide air navigation and aviation rescue fire fighting services (ARFFS). Airservices has provided life-saving rescue and fire fighting services at Perth Airport since 1995. Before 1995, various Commonwealth agencies provided ARFFS, dating back to the 1950s. All Airservices fire training for Western Australia ARFFS is conducted at Perth Airport.

Use of fire fighting foam at Perth Airport

Airservices does not use Aqueous Film Forming Foams (AFFF) containing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at Perth Airport, nor at any other civil airport in Australia. Airservices began transitioning away from these foams in the early 2000s when concerns began to emerge about the possible environmental impacts of these chemicals. Airservices has been using PFAS-free fire fighting foam at all civilian airports since 2010.

From the early 1980s until the early 2000s, various industries around the world used a fire fighting foam called 3M Lightwater. This AFFF was particularly effective for fighting liquid fuel fires and widely-adopted both in Australia and globally. It contained perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) as an active ingredient and other PFAS such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

In the early 2000s, as concerns emerged about the possible environmental effects of PFAS, Airservices changed to a fire fighting foam called Ansulite, on the understanding it did not contain PFAS. It was later found to contain trace amounts of PFOS. Since 2010, Airservices has used PFAS-free foam, Solberg RF6, at all civilian airports where it operates.

What action has Airservices taken at Perth Airport?

Foam transition and testing
Airservices completely transitioned to PFAS-free foam Solberg RF6 at all its civilian sites in 2010.

Investigation and characterisation
In 2016, Airservices commissioned independent environmental consultancy AECOM Australia to undertake a Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI) into PFAS contamination, to better understand the potential impacts from previous use of AFFFs at Perth Airport. It comprised reviews of available data, site interviews with Airservices and airport personnel, inspections and limited sampling. The results indicated the presence of PFAS on airport in soil, surface water and groundwater.

PFAS levels detected in soil samples were below the human health guideline values. PFAS was detected in surface water and groundwater above human and environmental health guidance values. Further investigations will be required to determine the extent of PFAS contamination.

The WA Government advises people with private bores should follow the WA Department of Health's advice on safe bore use — "bore water should never be used for drinking, bathing, watering

edible plants, filling swimming and paddling pools, food preparation or cooking unless it has been tested and treated to the extent necessary for the intended use." The Western Australia Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (WA DWER) public advice is that water supplied by state public water service providers, such as the Water Corporation, is regularly tested and meets Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

Consultation
Airservices is working closely with Perth Airport Pty Ltd (PAPL) and various state and Commonwealth Government agencies, including WA DWER and the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities (DIRDC) as the airport regulator.

Dedicated research and development
Airservices operates a proactive, parallel research and development program focused on identifying practical remediation and containment solutions to deal with PFAS contamination. Trials of possible solutions are underway at various sites nationwide. Airservices intends to implement successful technologies at Perth Airport, as appropriate.

Next steps

Airservices will now undertake a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI), at Perth Airport, which is likely to include on and off-airport investigation, to better understand the extent of any PFAS impacts from Airservices-leased areas, and to inform appropriate management actions.

Airservices is also finalising the PFAS Management Plan (PMP) for its leased area on the airport which includes an on-airport Groundwater and Surface Water Monitoring Plan. Airservices will continue to work closely with PAPL and federal and state regulators to manage legacy PFAS contamination arising from its activities at Perth Airport.

More information

- The PSI is available on the Airservices' website: https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/community/environment/pfas/
- For media enquiries, please call 1300 619 341 or e-mail media@airservicesaustralia.com
- For PFAS enquiries please e-mail the Airservices project team: pfascomms@airservicesaustralia.com
- For PFAS health related enquiries, please consult the Commonwealth Department of Health website: http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas.htm
- For more information about PFAS in WA, please visit the WA DWER website: https://www.der.wa.gov.au/our-work/community-updates/416-pfas-investigations-in-western-australia
- The WA Government Statement on PFAS is available here: https://www.der.wa.gov.au/images/documents/our-work/community-updates/PFAS/WA_Government_Statement_PFAS.pdf