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Sunshine Coast Airport Info Sheet

Sunshine Coast Airport and fire fighting foam

Airservices role at Sunshine Coast Airport

Airservices Australia (Airservices) is a government-owned organisation providing air navigation services and aviation rescue fire fighting (ARFF) services at Sunshine Coast Airport. Airservices commenced provision of firefighting services at the airport in 2004. Prior to 2004, these firefighting services were provided by Queensland Fire and Rescue.

Use of firefighting foam at Sunshine Coast Airport

When Airservices commenced at Sunshine Coast Airport in 2004, Airservices was using Ansulite at all of its operational locations. As such, Airservices has never used a foam with PFOS as an active ingredient at Sunshine Coast Airport. While Ansulite was initially understood not to contain PFOS it was later found to contain other PFAS chemicals and trace amounts of PFOS. Since 2010, Airservices has transitioned away from PFAS-containing foams at all civilian airports and instead uses Solberg RF6, including at Sunshine Coast Airport.

At Sunshine Coast Airport, ARFF services have been provided through a main fire station (MFS) and former fire station (FFS). The airport has no current or known former fire training area. Fire training for the Airservices' supplied fire service at Sunshine Coast Airport is conducted instead at the Brisbane Airport fire training ground. Whilst there is no fire training ground at the airport, foam has been released in response to aviation incidents and AEP exercises, including two small plane crashes in the north west of the runway in 2005 and 2006.

What action has Airservices taken at Sunshine Coast Airport?

In 2017, Airservices conducted a Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI) for PFAS contamination across Sunshine Coast Airport to better understand potential impacts which may be directly related to historic aviation firefighting operations. The PSI is part of a national PFAS management program.

The PSI reported that historical PFAS contamination was found at the airport. The PSI detected PFAS on the airport in close proximity to where firefighting activities were carried out, including the Former Fire Station and the Main Fire Station. The PSI reported that historical PFAS contamination was found at the airport. Results were generally low. The PSI findings suggest a low risk of PFAS contamination migrating off-site and impacting on drinking water sources. There was no indication of impact to human health on site.

Airservices has shared all the results with Sunshine Coast Airport and Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES).

Next steps

Although the results of the PSI suggest low risk to the environment, Airservices will be undertaking further targeted sampling on airport to investigate any potential off-site migration. Future assessment will be done in line with the new PFAS National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP) and guideline criteria.

Airservices will continue to work with relevant Commonwealth and State environmental and health regulators, and the airport, as part of a risk-based approach to responsibly managing PFAS concerns at Sunshine Coast Airport.

More information

Airservices will continue to keep the community informed. To speak to a member of the Airservices project team, email pfascomms@AirservicesAustralia.com

All media enquiries to Airservices will be directed to the Airservices media team on 1300 619 341 or media@airservicesaustralia.com

A copy of the report can be found at the Airservices Australia website: https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/community/environment/pfas/

For health related enquires on PFAS, advice should be sought from the Commonwealth Department of Health http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas.htm

Commonwealth PFAS website - https://www.pfas.gov.au/

DES Queensland: https://www.des.qld.gov.au