

Angus Fire Installation, Bentham

Questions and Answers Document

This document has been produced by the Environment Agency, with input from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and North Yorkshire Council. It is intended to answer questions from the community regarding the Angus Fire installation and issues around PFAS. This document will be updated as and when new questions are raised.

Q: What are PFAS?

A: Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of thousands of substances that share common properties, such as being water and oil-resistant. While this makes them useful in a wide range of products – from non-stick pans to fire-fighting foams to cosmetics – concerns have been raised about some PFAS as knowledge about them has increased, which has resulted in specific bans and restrictions, and subsequently new PFAS being developed to replace them. An important characteristic is that PFAS are very persistent in the environment, coining the phrase ‘forever chemicals’.

Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid (PFOS), Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorohexane Sulfonic Acid (PFHxS) are three well-studied PFAS which are now heavily restricted under international law; other PFAS chemicals may follow suit as more is discovered about how they impact the environment. There are thousands of other PFAS compounds that lack sufficient data on their environmental and health impacts, making regulation complex.

[Read more about PFAS](#)

Q: Where has the PFAS at Angus Fire, Bentham come from?

A: The PFAS at Angus Fire has come from historical activities at the site. The Angus fire site in High Bentham was used to produce firefighting foams for many years, with some of these foams containing PFAS. However, Angus Fire stopped testing foams containing PFAS at their Bentham site in 2022 and has since stopped manufacturing all foam products at the site.

However, these historical operations have led to PFAS accumulating at the site. Routine testing of a borehole beneath the Angus Fire site found high levels of PFAS. Angus Fire has confirmed that the borehole has been capped off and has never been used for drinking water.

Investigations are ongoing to look at to what extent PFAS from Angus Fire may have affected other parts of the site and potentially the surrounding area, and to what degree if any.

Q: Why are PFAS concerning?

A: There are many different PFAS compounds, some of which have been linked in research studies to health conditions including:

- increased cholesterol levels
- reduced ability of the body's immune system to fight infections and response to vaccines in children
- increased risk of some cancers, including kidney and testicular cancers
- interference with the body's natural hormones, including reproductive effects such as decreased fertility or increased high blood pressure in pregnant women
- developmental effects or delays in children, including low birth weight, accelerated puberty, bone variations, or behavioural changes

However, many studies do not provide a robust level of evidence, and there are inconsistencies between different studies. Results from individual studies also cannot be applied across all PFAS compounds.

Research is ongoing nationally and internationally to provide more evidence on the health impacts. Find out more on the [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int) website.

Potential health impacts in Bentham:

We currently do not have evidence of any health impacts of PFAS pollution from Angus Fire on the wider population. However, regulatory investigations are still ongoing, and updates from the investigations will be discussed with public health colleagues. If concerns are identified and evidenced that could have had a significant impact on health, these will be reported and the local community made aware.

In other sites internationally that have looked at environmental PFAS, one of the key issues has been continual exposure over many years of residents through contamination of local drinking water.

Q: Is my drinking water safe?

There is no evidence of drinking water contamination in Bentham by PFAS from Angus Fire.

The mains water supply for Bentham comes from further afield, including reservoirs in West Yorkshire and Nidderdale. Yorkshire Water samples of mains drinking water have come back in the lowest category for PFAS.

The private water supply has also been sampled for properties in Bentham that are not on mains water supply; in all the samples, all PFAS substances have been below detectable levels.

Q: What can I do to minimise my risk to PFAS?

A: While the full impact of PFAS on health is still being investigated, it remains sensible to take a precautionary approach to possible risks that may not yet be understood.

We may all encounter environmental hazards, including infectious diseases, chemicals and other agents, in day-to-day life. You can minimise any potential risk from PFAS or other environmental hazards by following standard preventative measures such as

- wash and peel vegetables to remove soil and other contaminants such as bacteria
- cover cuts and grazes while swimming in rivers or other open water sources
- avoid ingesting water while swimming in rivers or other open water sources
- attend routine health screenings (when offered), including health checks and cancer screening
- keep up to date with routine and seasonal immunisations

If you have any medical symptoms you are concerned about, get them checked out by an appropriate health professional.

Q: What is Angus Fire doing about PFAS on their site?

A: Angus Fire recently applied for a variation to their permit. After consultation with other organisations and the public, we have issued an environmental permit variation for this site.

The variation is for an effluent treatment plant to reduce the PFAS in both the collected rainwater and the future rainwater that falls onto the site. Rainwater falling on the site can pick up these chemicals, leading to contaminated water. Therefore, the effluent treatment plant will reduce the overall risk from PFAS entering the environment. Once treated at the effluent plant, the rainwater is discharged to the River Wenning.

The level of PFAS remaining in the treated rainwater discharged into the river would be in line with levels currently accepted as best practice for PFAS treatment processes.

[Read the Drinking Water Inspectorate's Guidance on PFAS and 'forever' chemicals.](#)

Angus Fire are currently investigating their site and surrounding land to undertake further testing on the site to determine the nature and extent of the potential PFAS contamination. The results and conclusions of this report are expected in the Autumn.

Q: What other agencies are involved in this site and what are their roles?

A: We are currently working in collaboration with other partners. These are North Yorkshire Council, UK Health Security Agency and Director of Public Health (DHP).

What are the roles of the other agencies involved?

North Yorkshire Council – the council has regulatory responsibility for two key areas of environmental protection that are relevant to the Angus Fire site. These are private water supplies and contaminated land.

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) – UKHSA provide evidence-based public health advice and assesses potential health impacts by reviewing available monitoring data from the site.

Director of Public Health (DPH) – they advise the local council on health matters and lead strategies to respond to public health issues.

Q: Where can I find out more information?

Environment Agency:

[The Environment Agency's role with PFAS 'Forever Chemicals' | Engage Environment Agency](#)

[Angus Fire - Bentham - Lancashire | Cumbria & Lancashire regulated sites | Engage Environment Agency](#)

North Yorkshire Council:

[Angus Fire, High Bentham | North Yorkshire Council](#)

Q: How can I stay informed and receive updates?

A: You can stay informed by regularly checking updates on the Environment Agency's Engagement HQ page for Angus Fire.

[Angus Fire - Bentham - Lancashire | Cumbria & Lancashire regulated sites | Engage Environment Agency](#)