



**Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation**

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# **DEC Announces New Comprehensive Sampling Initiative for Communities Surrounding Norlite State Responds to Community Concerns with Science-Based Soil and Water Sampling Plan**

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos today announced a new comprehensive soil and water sampling initiative to help determine if contaminants are present in the communities surrounding the Norlite facility in the city of Cohoes as a result of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) incineration and past practices of the facility. This action builds on DEC's ongoing response to community concerns to ensure the environment and community are protected since aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) containing PFAS was disposed at Norlite.

"DEC is working with the city of Cohoes and local residents to deploy New York State's expert scientific capabilities so that we can get real answers about the potential impacts of past AFFF incineration at Norlite," **Commissioner Seggos said**. "The sampling plan will collect essential data to guide future actions and will be valuable to both DEC and the community in the agency's rigorous review of Norlite's proposed permit renewal. DEC will be treating the renewal as a new application to ensure a full evaluation of all applicable potential environmental impacts and we will continue to involve this community in our decision-making every step of the way."

DEC directed Norlite to cease thermal treatment and disposal of AFFF containing PFAS compounds after the facility temporarily suspended operations at the end of 2019. Since that time, DEC has worked with local and state elected officials to assess the potential impacts of Norlite's past incineration of firefighting foam. DEC secured a commitment from Norlite to suspend all processing of AFFF materials until additional testing is conducted that establishes that high temperature incineration destroys these compounds. In addition, DEC has informed Norlite that the future incineration of any substances, including emerging contaminants like PFAS, not previously addressed in its permits, will trigger a requirement to seek a permit modification prior to processing in the facility.

The past incineration of PFAS has led to concerns from local residents and public officials that emissions from the facility could have caused a release of PFAS contaminants in the surrounding community. Since drinking water is a primary pathway for exposure to PFAS contamination, out of an abundance of caution, DEC and DOH first conducted sampling of the Cohoes and Green Island municipal water supplies earlier this year to determine if PFAS concentrations in water have changed over time. This sampling confirmed that there have been no impacts to area drinking water since Norlite began receiving AFFF.

To further advance the state's ongoing response efforts and scientific understanding of air emissions associated with PFAS compounds, DEC, in coordination with the state Department of Health (DOH), will

collect soil and water samples from upwind, downwind, downstream, upstream, and background locations to study trends that would show if aerial deposition of potential metal and PFAS contaminants exists. The results will be comprehensively reviewed to determine if there are any environmental impacts noted in the area studied and will guide additional actions in the future.

DEC's review of previous sampling conducted by Bennington College found it to be flawed and incomplete, and data from Bennington's testing did not find a pattern of AFFF-related contamination from Norlite in the community. DEC's sampling plan will take a comprehensive and fact-based approach to ensure results are scientifically sound and consistent with New York State's other nation-leading efforts to investigate and address AFFF and emerging contaminants statewide.

**Senator Neil Breslin said**, "The comprehensive sampling effort announced today will provide New York with a roadmap to protect the community of Cohoes. By working together with DEC and local residents, this study will provide us with the information we need to move forward and address community concerns."

**Assembly member John McDonald said**, "DEC's announcement today is a clear indicator that the agency is listening to this community and responsibly acting to uncover the environmental impact of this facility on Cohoes. This information will help determine our course of action in Cohoes and provide local residents with peace of mind. I am committed to this community and its residents and working with DEC."

"We know that PFAS chemicals can be harmful to people and the environment. We know the EPA has said the effectiveness of incineration to destroy PFAS compounds 'is not well understood.' What we don't know is what, if any, harm was done to people and the environment when 2.4 million pounds of AFFF firefighting foam containing PFAS chemicals was incinerated at Norlite in 2018 and 2019," **Cohoes Mayor Bill Keeler said**. "The DEC's plan to start an initial round of water and soil testing is welcome news in our quest for answers. I appreciate the effort they have put into preparing for this testing, including DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos' visit to Cohoes, and their efforts to get input from the community including area Mayors. This is just one step in what will be a long process, but it is a very important step."

In addition to the start of the new sampling initiative, Commissioner Seggos [recently announced](#) DEC will treat Norlite's pending Air Title V and Part 373 Hazardous Waste permit renewals as new permits, requiring expanded review. DEC will review all applications to ensure they are complete which will initiate a comprehensive public review of the application, which will require an expanded environmental justice-focused outreach to provide the public with the opportunity to comment on the overall facility operations and applicable potential environmental impacts.