



Understanding the Final PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation Hazard Index Maximum Contaminant Level

What is a Hazard Index Maximum Contaminant Level?

Decades of research show mixtures of different chemicals can have additive health effects, even if the individual chemicals are each present at lower levels. This means that low levels of multiple PFAS that individually would not likely result in adverse health effects may pose health concerns when combined in a mixture. The Hazard Index is a long-established approach that EPA regularly uses, for example in the Superfund program, to determine the health concerns associated with exposure to chemical mixtures. EPA's Hazard Index Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) is set at 1 and applies to any mixture containing two or more of PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and HFPO-DA (known as "GenX chemicals"). These PFAS can often be found together in different mixtures and research shows that exposure to mixtures of these chemicals may have additive health impacts.

How do I calculate the Hazard Index?

The Hazard Index is made up of a sum of fractions. Each fraction compares the level of each PFAS measured in the water to the highest level below which there is no risk of health effects. EPA is currently developing an online calculator to assist water systems in determining their Hazard Index result. The online calculator will perform the calculation explained in this fact sheet.

Step 1. Divide the measured concentration of Gen X by its health-based value of 10 ppt.

Step 2. Divide the measured concentration of PFBS by its health-based value of 2000 ppt.

Step 3. Divide the measured concentration of PFNA by its health-based value of 10 ppt.

Step 4. Divide the measured concentration of PFHxS by its health-based value of 10 ppt.

Step 5. Add the ratios from steps 1, 2, 3 and 4 together.

Equation:

$$\text{Hazard Index (1 unitless)} = \left(\frac{[\text{HFPO-DA}_{\text{ppt}}]}{[10 \text{ ppt}]} \right) + \left(\frac{[\text{PFBS}_{\text{ppt}}]}{[2000 \text{ ppt}]} \right) + \left(\frac{[\text{PFNA}_{\text{ppt}}]}{[10 \text{ ppt}]} \right) + \left(\frac{[\text{PFHxS}_{\text{ppt}}]}{[10 \text{ ppt}]} \right)$$

Step 6. Compliance with the Hazard Index MCL is determined by a running annual average. To determine the running annual average, repeat

steps 1-5 for each quarterly sample collected in the past year and calculate the average of these quarterly Hazard Index results.

Step 7. If the running annual average Hazard Index is greater than the MCL of 1, it is a violation of the Hazard Index MCL (see Table for example).

Chemical	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4	
	Sample	Q1 Formula	Sample	Q2 Formula	Sample	Q3 Formula	Sample	Q4 Formula
HFPO-DA (ppt)	5 ppt	5 ppt/10 ppt = 0.5	5 ppt	5 ppt/10 ppt = 0.5	Not detected	0 ppt/10 ppt = 0	Not detected	0 ppt/10 ppt = 0
PFBS (ppt)	5 ppt	5 ppt/2000 ppt = 0.0025	5 ppt	5 ppt/2000 ppt = 0.0025	Not detected	0 ppt/2000 ppt = 0	Not detected	5 ppt/2000 ppt = 0.0025
PFNA (ppt)	Not detected	0 ppt/10 ppt = 0	Not detected	0 ppt/10 ppt = 0	4 ppt	4 ppt /10 ppt = 0.4	Not detected	0 ppt/10 ppt = 0
PFHxS (ppt)	3 ppt	3 ppt/10 ppt = 0.3	Not detected	0 ppt/10 ppt = 0	4 ppt	4 ppt /10 ppt = 0.4	6 ppt	6 ppt/10 ppt = 0.6
Hazard Index (unitless)	0.5 + 0.0025 + 0 + 0.3 = 0.8025		0.5 + 0.0025 + 0 + 0 = 0.5025		0 + 0 + 0.4 + 0.4 = 0.8		0 + 0.0025 + 0 + 0.6 = 0.6025	
Running Annual Average = $\left(\frac{0.8025 + 0.5025 + 0.8 + 0.6025}{4}\right) = 0.6769 = 0.7$								
The Hazard Index Running Annual Average result is 0.7 (rounded to one significant digit). Because this result does not exceed 1, the water system has not exceeded the MCL. Therefore, no violation of the Hazard Index MCL has occurred.								