EPA Statement on Hoosick Falls Water Contamination

December 17, 2015

Recently, members of the Hoosick Falls community have contacted the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with concerns and questions about whether they should drink, bathe in, or cook with their water, which has been found to contain perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

PFOA is a manmade chemical that is toxic and persistent in the environment. It is used as a surface-active agent and in variety of products, such as fire-fighting foams, coating additives and cleaning products.

While the EPA continues to gather information and assess the Hoosick Falls water contamination, it recommends that people **NOT** drink the water from the Hoosick Falls public water supply or use it for cooking.

There is a lack of studies evaluating the human health effects from inhalation and skin exposure to PFOA. The EPA believes that inhalation of PFOA contaminated water (for example, from showering or bathing) is not a significant exposure. PFOA has a much higher boiling point (372.2°F) than water (212°F), is a solid with a very low evaporation rate at room temperature, and any inhalation of the steam-like, aerosolized, PFOA-contaminated water droplets generated while showering or bathing is not a significant exposure.

Similar to inhalation exposure, the EPA also believes that skin contact with PFOA-contaminated water from the public water supply in Hoosick Falls is not a significant exposure. Studies have demonstrated very limited absorption of PFOA through the skin, and the uptake of PFOA through the skin is extremely slow. As a precautionary measure and given the limited information on dermal exposure, children or people with skin conditions (for example, rashes, cuts and abrasions) should avoid prolonged contact (such as long showers or long baths) with PFOA-contaminated water.

The EPA is continuing to gather information and will keep the public informed. Public inquiries can be directed to Larisa Romanowski at Romanowski.Larisa@epa.gov or 518-407-0400.