Last updated: [January, 2026]

UK/EU differences in regulatory controls on PFAS (per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances)

	EU	UK
International bans, under the Stockholm Convention	**Sub-groups of PFAS banned both in the UK and EU** PFOS entered into force in 2009[1] PFOA and related substances entered into force in 2020[2] PFHxS and related substances entered into force in 2023[3] C9-C21 PFCAs, their salts and related compounds in 2025.	
Sub-groups of PFAS restricted[4] pre-EU exit	**Sub-groups of PFAS banned both in the UK and EU** Restriction on (tridecafluorooctyl)silanetriol and its mono-, di- or tri-O-(alkyl) derivatives (TDFAs)[5], adopted in 2019 and entered into force in January 2021[6]	
Sub-groups of PFAS restricted since Jan 2021	C9-C-14 PFCA and related substances[7] entered into force 2023. These are long-chain PFAS that are used in a broad range of applications[8] PFHxA[9] The EU has agreed on a restriction on the use of PFHxA[10]. The restriction will ban the sale and use of PFHxA in consumer textiles, such as rain jackets; food packaging, like pizza boxes; consumer mixtures such as waterproofing sprays; cosmetics like skin care products; and in some firefighting foam applications like for training and testing, without compromising safety. The PFHxA restriction formally entered into force on October 10, 2024. It will take effect after transitional periods of between 18 months and 5 years, depending on the use, allowing time for replacement by safer alternatives.	No PFAS sub-groups have been banned in the UK since January 2021.
Proposals for regulating PFAS as a group	Universal PFAS restriction [initiated in February 2023] restricts the import, manufacture and use of over 10,000 PFAS in a wide variety of sectors[11] (with derogations[12] for some sectors)[13]	UK REACH PFAS Regulatory Management Options Analysis (RMOA) [Published in March 2023] adopts a narrow definition of PFAS, with only a few hundred substances in the scope, excluding thousands of PFAS. For example, some fluoropolymers which are a type of polymeric PFAS have been left out of the scope of restriction[14]. The RMOA also covers fewer sectors as compared to the universal PFAS restriction. For example, sectors such as medical devices, transport, petroleum and mining, cosmetics etc are not covered in the RMOA.
Firefighting foams (FFF)	A restriction on FFF was initiated by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) in March 2022. A full group-based restriction for all PFAS used in FFF was proposed (with derogations for some uses[15]). The EU commission[16] reviewed the ECHA proposal and, in October	The HSE has initiated a restriction on PFAS in firefighting foams under UK REACH, closely mirroring the ban on PFAS use in firefighting foams in the EU. Stakeholders have until February 2026 to feed into the public consultation.

	2025, adopted a ban[17]. Additionally, the universal PFAS[18] and PFHxA[19] restrictions also cover some uses of firefighting foams.	
Drinking water (EU) **Drinking water (national regulations in EU countries)**	Member States need to comply with the Drinking water directive thresholds. This kicked into effect on 12th January 2026. • **'Sum of PFAS'** = 0.1 microgram per litre (µg/L) for a group of 20[20] PFAS. This means that the sum of 20 PFAS should not be above 0.1 ug per litre of drinking water. • **'PFAS total'** = 0.5 µg/L. This means that the sum of all PFAS should not be above 0.5 ug per litre of drinking water.	England and Wales have guidance (non-binding) on PFAS in water - a 'wholesomeness' guideline value of 0.1 ug/l for 47 PFAS is listed in the DWI's guidance to water companies. Overall, there are no statutory drinking water limits for PFAS in England and Wales. The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) has recently announced some changes to the guidance. This includes measuring 6:2 fluorotelomer sulfonamide alkylbetaine (FTAB) in addition to the 47 other PFAS from January 2025. Scotland adheres to the EU guidelines.
Surface[21] and ground water	In 2022, the European Commission proposed introducing new EU standards for sum of 24[22] PFAS not to exceed 4.4 ng per litre of surface and groundwaters. The EU institutions reached an agreement in September 2025. TFA was added to the initially proposed sum of 24 PFAS. However, member States managed to secure long timelines to act. Member States have until 2039, with the possibility to delay until 2045, to comply with the new standards. Member states will have to transpose the directive into national law by 21 December 2027.	The Environment Agency monitors some PFAS in surface and ground water but there are no statutory limits.
Biota[23]	0.077 µg/kg wet weight for the group of 24[24] PFAS in biota was proposed by the EU commission in 2022. This means that the sum of 24 PFAS should not exceed 0.077 ug per kg wet weight of the plants and animals of any particular region. The is currently being discussed in trilogues.	The Environment Agency tests for both PFOS and PFOA (the two most widely detected PFAS chemicals) in freshwater wildlife – known as biota-testing. But there is no Environmental Safety Standard set for PFOA in biota under current UK legislation. PFOS is a Priority Hazardous Substance under the UK Water Framework Directive and the Environmental Quality Standard (EQS) for biota is set at 9.1 µg/kg (wet weight)[25].
Food and food packaging	The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has established a Tolerable Weekly Intake (TWI) of 4.4 ng/kg body weight for PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, PFHxS. This means that the combined weekly intake of these four PFAS is recommended to be no higher than 4.4 ng per kg of human body weight. The European Commission adopted the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) in January 2025. This regulation covers the full life cycle of packaging and aims to significantly reduce the generation of packaging waste in the EU. It introduces a ban on the intentional use of PFAS in food packaging[26]. The regulation	No thresholds. CHEM Trust recently wrote to the Food standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland asking them to revise the TWI as per the EFSA opinion and received this response. No restrictions on PFAS in food packaging are being taken forward in the UK currently.

	entered into force on 11th February 2025, following which there is an 18-month transition period.	
Waste	In November 2022, the EU adopted a limit value of 0.1 mg/kg and 20 mg/kg respectively for PFOA and related substances as well as PFHxS and related substances under annex IV[27] of the POPs regulation[28]. Under annex V[29] the threshold of PFOA and PFOS and their related substances is 50 mg/kg and 2000 mg/kg respectively. The uPFAS regulation will also restrict a wide range of PFAS from being used which means that there will be less PFAS at the waste stage.	A new statutory instrument has recently been adopted, taking forward changes to the UK's regulation of POPs in waste, matching those of the EU's.
Soil	The EU council formally adopted the formally adopted the soil monitoring directive in September 2025 with the overarching aspirational goal of achieving healthy soils across Europe by 2050. Steps will be taken towards monitoring emerging contaminants such as PFAS, pesticides and microplastics.	No monitoring of PFAS in soils in the UK.
Toys	The EU has expanded the Toy Safety law and a PFAS ban in Toys was agreed in April 2025.	Northern Ireland falls under EU REACH, which means that Irish citizens will get protection from regulations adopted under the Toys regulation. This will not apply to other parts of the UK.

REFERENCES

1. 1 micro gram per meter square (ug/m^2) for textiles or other coated materials, 10 mg/kg (0,001 % by weight) where it is present in substances or in mixtures and lower than 0,1 % by weight in semi-finished products or articles.
2. 25 parts per billion (ppb) and 1,000 ppb respectively for PFOA/its salts; and related substances.
3. 25 ppb and 1,000 ppb respectively for PFHxS/its salts; and related substances.
4. Substances that pose risks to health and/or the environment can be "restricted", including through a total ban on a substance, bans on certain uses or concentrations, or requirements for technical measures or specific labelling.
5. Generally used in spray products.
6. 2 ppb by weight of the mixtures containing organic solvents, in spray products.
7. 9 and 14 refer to the number of carbon chains in a molecule. C9 molecules have 9 carbon atoms and C14 have 14 carbon atoms. The thresholds are 25 ppb and 260 ppb respectively for C9-C14 PFCAs/their salts; and related substances.
8. C9-C14 PFCAs, their salts and related compounds are used, or may have been used, in a range of applications, including in industrial applications (e.g. as surfactants, and in the production of fluoropolymers); electronics; medical devices; printing inks and photographic materials; automotive care products; building and construction materials; cookware and food-contact materials; fire-fighting foams; ski waxes; and various consumers products (such as household products, personal care products, home textiles and apparel).
9. PFHxA are a subgroup of PFAS that are used in sectors such as clothing, textiles and paper and cardboard food packaging, fire-fighting foams etc.

10. 25 ppb for the sum of PFHxA and its salts, and 1000 ppb for the sum of PFHxA-related substance. Eif dates below:
    April 10, 2026: fire-fighting foams for training, testing and public fire services.
    October 10, 2026: textiles, leather, furs and hides in clothing and related accessories for the general public; footwear for the general public; paper and cardboard used as food contact materials within the scope of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004; mixtures for the general public; cosmetic products as defined in Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009.
    October 10, 2027: textiles, leather, furs and hides in products other than clothing and related accessories for the general public.
    October 10, 2029: firefighting foams for civil aviation.
11. Textiles, upholstery, leather, apparel, carpets (TULAC), food contact material, metal plating and manufacture of metal products, consumer mixtures, cosmetics, ski wax, fluorinated gases, medical devices, transport, electronics and semiconductors, energy sector, construction products, lubricants, petroleum and mining.
12. A derogation is an exemption from the law.
13. For some uses of PFAS, such as in medical devices, petroleum and the mining industry, derogations of up to 13.5 years are foreseen. There are two time-unlimited derogations (Derogation 5.t for analytical reference and instrument calibration materials, needed for environmental monitoring; and derogation 5.j for Refrigerants in HVACR- equipment's in buildings where national safety standards and building codes prohibit the use of alternatives). Biocides, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, and active ingredients in veterinary products are currently exempted from the scope.
14. Independent peer- reviewed scientific literature shows that the production, use and end of life of fluoropolymers are associated with emissions of other PFAS which pose an unacceptable risk to human health and the environment. For eg. See: Lohmann, R., Cousins, I.T., DeWitt, J.C., Glüge, J., Goldenman, G., Herzke, D., Lindstrom, A.B., Miller, M.F., Ng, C.A., Patton, S., Scheringer, M., Trier, X., and Wang, Z. (2020), Are Fluoropolymers Really of Low Concern for Human and Environmental Health and Separate from Other PFAS *Environmental Science and Technology,* vol. 20, no. 54, pp.12820-12828. 10.1021/acs.est.0c03244
15. **Original ECHA proposal:** 3 years after Entry into Force (Eif) for civilian ships; 5 years after EiF for portable fire extinguishers as defined by EN3-7; 10 years after EiF for establishments covered by the Directive 2012/18/EU (Seveso III)11 (upper and lower tiers); 5 years after EiF for all other uses not covered by paragraphs 3(a), 3(b) 3(c), 3(d) and 3(e). **SEAC opinion**: increase transition period for uses at offshore installations in the oil and gas industry from five to ten years, and those for civilian shipping from three to five years.
16. The European Commission is the EU's politically independent executive arm. It is alone responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation, and it implements the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.
17. The Commission accepted SEAC's suggestion to increase transition period for uses at offshore installations in the oil and gas industry from five to ten years, and those for civilian shipping from three to five years and went beyond SEAC's suggestion of a five-year transition period for uses in ships already in service and military ships, increasing this to ten years.
18. The Universal PFAS includes restrictions on fluorinated fire suppressant gases (13.5 years after EiF) and personal protective equipment (13.5 years after EiF).
19. The PFHxA restriction restricts the use of PFHxA in FFF from 18 months after EiF in training and testing; 18 months after EiF in municipal fires and 5 years after EiF in civil aviation.
20. PFBA, PFPA, PFHxA, PFHpA, PFOA, PFNA, PFDA, PFUnDA, PFDoDA, PFTrDA, PFBS, PFPS, PFHxS, PFHpS, PFOS, PFNS, PFDS, Perfluoroundecane sulfonic acid, Perfluorododecane sulfonic acid, Perfluorotridecane sulfonic acid
21. Surface water is any body of water above ground, including streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, reservoirs, and creeks.
22. PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS, PFNA, PFBS, PFHxA, PFBA, PFPeA, PFPeS, PFDA, PFUnA, PFDoDA, PFHpA, PFTrDA, PFHPS, PFDS, PFTeDA, PFHxDA, PFODA, Gen-X, ADONA, 6:2 FTOH, 8:2 FTOH, Acetic Acid.
23. Refers to the plants and animals found in a region.
24. PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS, PFNA, PFBS, PFHxA, PFBA, PFPeA, PFPeS, PFDA, PFUnA, PFDoDA, PFHpA, PFTrDA, PFHPS, PFDS, PFTeDA, PFHxDA, PFODA, Gen-X, ADONA, 6:2 FTOH, 8:2 FTOH, Acetic Acid.
25. https://www.wcl.org.uk/pfas-pollution-warning-signal-in-freshwater-fish.asp#:~:text=PFOS%20is%20a%20Priority%20Hazardous,%2Fkg%20(wet%20weight).
26. 25 ppb for any PFAS and 250 ppb for the sum of PFAS (see article 5 of PPWR for more info). The regulation also brings in requirements for manufacturers of all kinds of packaging to minimise concentrations of substances of concern and the adverse impact of microplastics on the environment.
27. Annex IV sets low concentration limits for certain POPs in waste, which define whether this waste can be recycled or has to be destroyed or irreversibly transformed.
28. The revision of these annexes aims to address the negative consequences of the presence of certain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in waste and in material that could be recovered from it, ensuring that such waste is managed in an environmentally sound way and that it achieves safer recycling.
29. Annex V lists the disposal and recovery operations, applied in a way to ensure that the POP content is destroyed or transformed.