



NANTUCKET FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 2509

4 Fairgrounds Road
Nantucket, MA 02554

February 7, 2022

Dear Town of Nantucket's School Committee,

We are alarmed that Nantucket Public School has made a push to advocate for several artificial turf fields. We feel it is imperative to speak regarding the dangers that will threaten the health and safety of the community we serve.

The threat of PFAS (Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances) is one that 1.2 million firefighters across the U.S. have to grapple with daily. Unknowingly we have been poisoned by the protective gear we wear and the fire fighting foam we use. This has come at high cost to physical and mental health.

The fire service has been misled by the chemical industry for decades. When it came to PFAS in turnout gear and Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) , the focus was on the benefits the products provided – not the environmental and public health hazards they pose. As an example, the community has learned that the wells around our airport are contaminated with PFAS. Sadly, school officials and consultants are claiming possible PFAS contamination would not pose any concerns for health or safety. We dont believe the risks outweigh the benefits.

We have witnessed the chemical industry change its narrative on the many applications of PFAS. First, we were told that there is no PFAS in our protective gear. Then we were told that there was good and bad PFAS, but they only used the “good” PFAS. This language is intentionally misleading.

Sadly, we now see those same misleading industry tactics promoting firefighter protective gear and AFFF used to describe artificial turf. Even the same language is being used – “safe,” “inert,” “stable,”and “biocompatible.” These industry talking points, often delivered by industry funded scientists, were intended to mislead all of us, confuse the science, and minimize the very real environmental and public health hazards in the interest of corporate profit.

We have been following this issue closely and have watching the regulatory landscape shift, but it is still outdated and fails to adequately protect the public. We continue to remain vigilant as well as hopeful. Massachusetts and the EPA will be regulating more PFAS and Mass DEP will be reevaluating their own maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) every three years to ensure they are incorporating the latest science. Europe has already decided to ban more than 200 different types of PFAS.

It is imperative that we do all that we can to minimize these persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic chemicals. When we subject our children, our waterways, and our ecosystems to these chemicals, we have no idea what the consequences may be or how far they may reach. PFAS have made their way into innumerable products that we already use in our daily lives, including waterproof clothing, non-stick pans, stain resistant furniture and carpets, cosmetics, and more. All of these sources are problematic and even more reason for Nantucket to show leadership and say no to further PFAS contamination.

PFAS regulation started at the local level. It starts with conversations like this one, where community members come together, to educate themselves, and use their voices to make informed choices. In this case, there is an obvious alternative. A well designed, organically maintained grass field with an upgraded field maintenance program. We believe this is the far more responsible choice compared to the risk of these forever chemicals leaching into our water table, not to mention the plastic pollution, heat island effect, injury risks, VOCs and too many more to list. This alternative allows us to err on the side of caution.

It is an insult to the members of Professional Fire Fighters Local 2509 and everyone who has worked ceaselessly to eliminate PFAS to have our school system even consider a toxic turf field. We are asking that Nantucket make the decision to turn off the PFAS tap off whenever and wherever there is a safe alternative.

We took an oath to protect the lives and property of our residents and visitors. It is our moral duty to speak up.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey Allen

President of Nantucket Professional Fire Fighters Local 2509

Shane Perry

Vice President Nantucket Professional Fire Fighters Local 2509

