

# Air National Guard seeks new system to filter PFOS/PFOA

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The U.S. Air National Guard is looking to purchase a new system to remove perfluorinated chemicals from two wastewater lagoons located at the Stewart Air National Guard Base. The lagoons, located in New Windsor, are designed to hold wastewater that comes from the de-icing of aircrafts on the base.

The Air National Guard posted a request for proposals this month seeking a "complete turn-key solution for an industrial wastewater-filtration system" to treat the wastewater. "The contractor would be responsible for providing a short-term rental filtration system that is capable of removing all PFOA/PFOS from the industrial waste lagoons to a non-detectable level," a listing on the Federal Business Opportunities website states.

The RFP stands out in light of contamination of City of Newburgh drinking water by perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) flowing from the air base property. When asked this month why the lagoons are treated for PFOS and



The Stewart Air National Guard Base has been filtering PFOS and PFOA out of wastewater lagoons since 2016.

other perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) but a contaminated pond spewing PFOS into the city's drinking watershed from the air base is not, the U.S. Air Force responded Tuesday to say no one was available for a comment.

The Air National Guard began filtering the chemicals from the lagoons in 2016,

shortly after it became known that PFOS was seeping from the air base and into the local watershed. State testing showed the chemical had contaminated nearby wells in the towns of Newburgh and New Windsor, and the City of Newburgh's drinking water reservoir at Washington Lake.

The chief source of the contamination was traced back to Recreation Pond, a retention pond that accepts runoff from the airbase, where PFOS-containing fire foam had been used for years. The pond empties into Silver Stream, which flows into the city's drinking watershed.

The stream also leads to Moodna Creek in New Windsor, where the Kroll Well and Beaver Dam Lake were also found to be contaminated with PFOS, though well below the EPA's current health-advisory level.

"The purpose of the lagoons is to measure the strength of the chemical used for de-icing," said New Windsor Water Operations Engineer John Egitto, specifically glycol-based chemicals. "Once the issue with PFOS became known, the town decided we needed to include PFOS as a parameter for testing."

"We reached out to the Department of Environmental Conservation to determine if there were limits to the PFCs we could accept," he said. "The DEC said it would be prudent not to accept any detectable amount of PFC contaminants."

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## Newburgh Fire Department to overhaul radio systems

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bandwidth. This posed a safety hazard during the fatal chemical fire at the Verla cosmetics factory in New Windsor in November last year.

One man died in the blaze and more than 30 people were injured, including eight City of Newburgh fire fighters. Several city firefighters suffered from second-degree burns, one broke his leg and another sustained hearing damage. "Some of those guys had no idea those conditions were deteriorating," Ahlers said. "They could not hear the other departments talking."

During the fire, city firefighters used the VHF radios while the other responding fire departments were working with UHF radios. This proved to be extremely dangerous when an explosion took place while the firefighters were inside the Verla facility.

"When the explosion occurred, they radioed for help but no one heard them, due to the different frequency being used, and no one knew where to look for them once they were determined to be missing," Larkin wrote to State Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan, asking for the funding in February. "One firefighter was trapped for nine minutes continually transmitting his location to no avail. He was rescued just as his air ran out."

The new radio system equipment will be water and heat-resistant, allowing firefighters to operate the radios without having to take off their gloves. The radio system will also have a distress locator feature that, with the click of a button, will be able to send out distress signals. "If he can get that (button) pressed, they will be able to



Acting City of Newburgh Fire Chief Terry Ahlers holds new radio equipment at the City of Newburgh Fire Department on Tuesday. A lack of needed radio equipment put city firefighters in a dangerous situation during the Verla factory fire in November, he said.

find him," Ahlers said.

Larkin and Ahlers were joined Tuesday by city and county officials including Orange County District Attorney David Hoovler, District 4 County Legislator Kevindaryan Lujan, Orange County Sheriff Carl DuBois and Newburgh City Manager Michael Ciaravino.

## Security system

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everything centralized."

Upgrades also include a visitor-management system, social-media monitoring and an automatic lockdown system capable of locking a school down from the click of a mouse, phone system or a hard-wired panic button.

"A lot of our systems are aging," Bilyou said. "Our camera system is analog now. We're looking to update that to an IP system and to further enhance the security system in the district."

The proposal follows closely after a mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where 17 students and school staff were killed on Valentine's Day. The shooting sparked nationwide protests, led by Parkland students demanding tighter gun control laws.

Another shooting at Great Mills High School in Lexington, Maryland, on March 20 resulted in the deaths of two students, including the 16-year-old shooter. In January, a 15-year-old student shot and killed two students at Marshall County High School in Benton, Kentucky. More than a dozen people were wounded.

According to the school district, the new high-tech security features are expected to cost a total of \$3,567,985. The improvements would be paid for through almost \$13 million in Smart Schools Bond Act funding. If approved, Long Island-based IntraLogic Solutions would carry out the work for the project.

A public hearing is scheduled for the proposal during the Newburgh BOE meeting on Tuesday, May 8. The board is expected to vote on the security plan that evening. For more information on the security-system proposal, visit [Newburghschools.org](http://Newburghschools.org).

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"Once we notified the air base that we would no longer be willing to accept discharged wastewater because of

the PFOS/PFOA concentrations, they went ahead and obtained a portable treatment system," he said.

The town required the wastewater to test "non-detect" for PFOS and PFOA - with less than 2 parts per trillion of the chemicals - before it could be routed to the town's wastewater treatment plant on Caesars Lane, Egitto said.

The lagoons are about 300 feet from Recreation Pond, said Egitto, which has yet to be cleaned up by the Air National Guard, its parent agency, the U.S. Department of Defense, or the DEC. The pond continues to carry PFCs into the watershed.

"The state's primary concern is for the protection of public health and the environment," said DEC spokesman Kevin Frazier in a statement on Tuesday. "We will continue to address PFC contamination in the face of any failure by DoD to do so."

Since the onset of the water crisis, lawmakers, residents and environmentalists have railed against the DoD's lack of action regarding contamination at the pond, which, in 2016, the DEC reported to have a PFOS level of 5,900 parts per trillion - more than 84 times the current lifetime health-advisory level set by the EPA. "You make a mess, you clean up the mess," U.S. Senator Charles Schumer said, chastising the DoD at a press conference in May last year.

The DEC also criticized the DoD. "New York State has spent tens of millions of dollars to aggressively respond to contamination caused by the Department of Defense (DoD) at several sites across the state, including

an estimated \$50 million in the Newburgh area," Frazier stated Tuesday.

While DoD's commitment to negotiate on future agreements is long overdue, the state is deeply concerned that DoD continues to shirk their responsibility to pay for these past investments to protect public health. DoD must follow the 'polluter pays' principle, and DEC (will) take any necessary actions to ensure the state and our communities are not left footing the bill for our work to protect residents from DoD contamination."

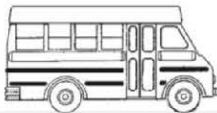
The city currently relies on the Catskill Aqueduct for its municipal water. The DEC is now testing a new carbon-filtration system it paid for to filter out PFCs at the city's water treatment plant.

The state is assessing the pollution at Recreation Pond, DEC Deputy Commissioner of Remediation and Materials Management Martin Brand said at Newburgh City Hall in January.

"The (Department of Transportation) and the DEC have been working at Rec Pond, taking samples, looking at flow rates, looking at design parameters in order to design a system that is going to cut those discharges off," he said. However, Brand did not say if or when the state would install a filtration system at the pond.

*Editor's Note: Mid Hudson Times Publisher Carl Aiello is among the plaintiffs in a class-action suit filed on behalf of residents exposed to the chemical PFOS.*

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