



News & Types: Real Estate Update

PFAS – What Are They and How Can Society Get Rid of Them?

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In the environmental world, Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, otherwise known as PFAS, are “forever chemicals.” They are man-made chemicals that have been used since the 1940’s. Over time they can leak into the soil, water and air. They exist in non-stick cookware, cleaning products, water-repellant clothing, some cosmetics, and stain-resistant fabrics, among other items. They are also used in the production of many substances such as adhesives, construction materials, firefighting foams, and in medical devices.

Humans are exposed to PFAS through contaminated food and water. PFAS break down slowly, meaning that human exposure can last for an extended period of time. The use of PFAS has decreased since the early 2000’s; however, the creation of new PFAS poses a new threat. There are multiple detrimental health effects following exposure to these forever chemicals raising public health concerns, such as thyroid issues, cancer, damage to the liver and immune system, as well as fertility issues. Studies are being conducted with regard to the extent of health effects when exposed to PFAS, including the type of product, soil, or water someone is exposed to containing PFAS. Researchers face a myriad of challenges because there are many types of PFAS in various products and settings.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, as well as the EPA and CDC, are actively researching and working to characterize and understand the health effects of exposure to PFAS, how and where PFAS are moving through the environment, determining ways to identify, detect, and measure, and ultimately develop technologies to get rid of or destroy PFAS. Most recently, in July 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency added certain PFAS as chemicals of concern and Recognized Environmental Conditions. It is recommended that every purchaser or lessee of real property conducts appropriate environmental investigations of the property.

Please contact any member of Masuda Funai’s Real Estate practice group with any questions.

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