About the Preliminary Site Investigation

The Department of Defence has finalised a Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI) into per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at Salt Ash Air Weapons Range.

The PSI, which commenced in July 2018, has now been completed. The PSI involved the historical review of legacy firefighting foam use and storage, to identify where legacy firefighting foam was used (sources), as well as how PFAS moves in the environment. The PSI also included on-range sampling of groundwater, surface water, soil and sediment. Limited off-range sampling was undertaken.

This PSI is part a national review of Defence properties, which may have used firefighting foam containing specific types of PFAS, as active ingredients.

However, the PSI found no records of the historical use of these foams at Salt Ash Air Weapons Range.

Key Findings of the Preliminary Site Investigation

The outcomes of the PSI concluded there is no requirement for further environmental investigations into PFAS at or surrounding the Range.

The PSI found that:

- PFAS was not widespread and only found in low concentrations;
- There were no detections of PFAS in surface water or soil samples;
- There were no detections of PFAS in groundwater monitoring wells installed at, or close, to the Range boundary; and
- Groundwater flow was consistent with historical data. Groundwater generally flows in a northerly or south-easterly direction.

All current potential PFAS exposure pathways suggest no exposure-risk based on the sampling undertaken during the PSI.

Salt Ash Residents within the existing NSW EPA Management Area

In November 2017, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) designated a Management Area, as part of the nearby RAAF Base Williamtown Environmental Investigation. This Management Area is approximately 400 metres south-west of the Salt Ash Air Weapons Range.

Salt Ash residents within this Management Area should continue to follow the EPA’s precautionary advice, as part of minimising exposure to PFAS, originating from the RAAF Base Williamtown. For more information contact 131 555 or visit www.epa.nsw.gov.au.

Contact Information

Phone 1800 714 139 (business hours)
Email SaltAsh.Defence@aecom.com

Media enquiries should be directed to Defence Media on (02) 6127 1999 or media@defence.gov.au