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Department of Defense
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Community Engagement at the Department of Defense

Briefing for the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives pursuant to Senate Report 118-158, page 109, accompanying National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024

February 2024

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$1,390 for the 2024 Fiscal Year. This includes \$150 in expenses and \$1,240 in DoD labor.

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Purpose



- Senate Report 118-58, page 109, accompanying S. 2226 National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, requests the Under Secretary of Defense to provide a briefing to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees on the efforts of the Department to strengthen outreach and engagement efforts with communities impacted by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Environmental Cleanup Communication & Outreach Initiative



- **Fall 2022:** Department of Defense (DoD) publicly committed to expanding community outreach with community members and stakeholders to strengthen relationships and consistently convey information regarding DoD's PFAS cleanup process and ongoing progress.
- **November 2022:** Hired a full-time employee to oversee the development of a PFAS cleanup communication and outreach program.
- **December 2022:** Launched the DoD Environmental Cleanup Communication & Outreach Initiative, which is a coordinated effort between the DoD PFAS Task Force and the Military Departments (MILDEPs).



Environmental Cleanup Communication & Outreach Initiative



During 2023, DoD executed Phase 1 to personally listen to and gain an understanding of the existing state of communication and outreach, and to identify best practices.

- Completed in-person installation visits, Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) observations, RAB and community member interviews, and stakeholder interviews.
- Examined current cleanup communication techniques and tools across MILDEPs.
- Launched an online cleanup communication questionnaire.
- Analyzed improvements to the DoD PFAS public website (defense.gov/pfas).

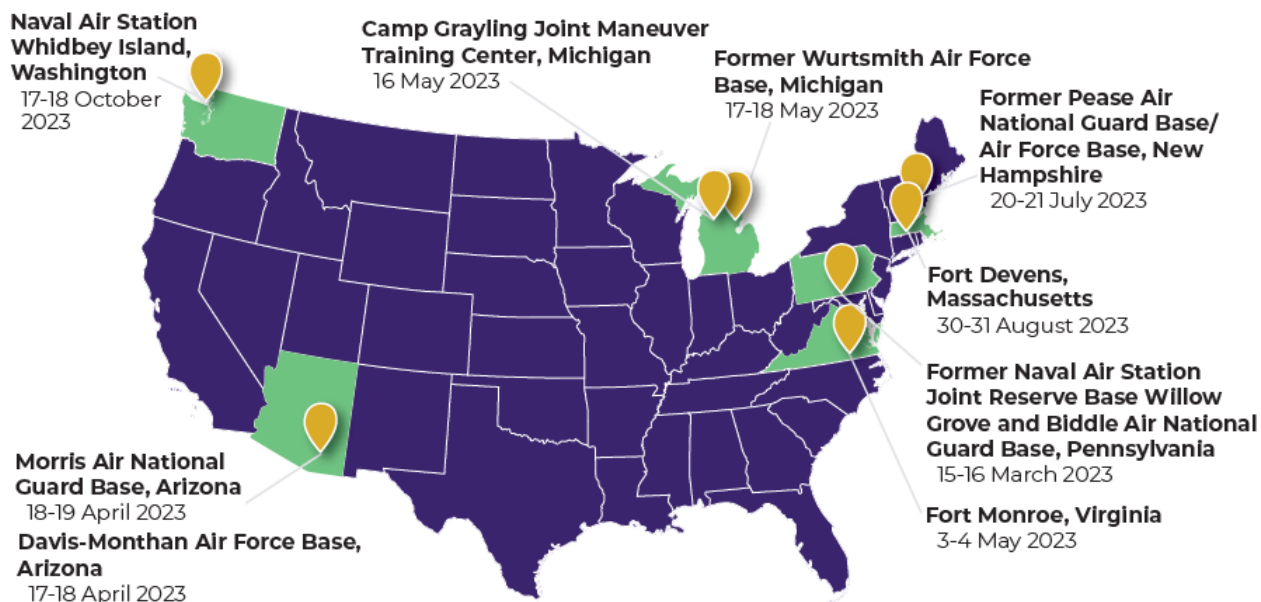




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Environmental Cleanup Communication & Outreach Initiative

DoD completed 11 installation visits, 7 in-person RAB observations, and more than 100 in-person community and stakeholder interviews at various installations across the Nation.



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Environmental Cleanup Communication & Outreach Initiative



Phase 1 Key Findings

Feedback from community members and stakeholders requested

- Easier access to reports and information
- Opportunities to get involved early and often
- Increased frequency of communication about cleanup progress
- Help with applying for Technical Assistance for Public Participation
- More communication about when RABs are happening
- Information about potential health-related impacts from PFAS
- Simplified presentations avoiding the use of jargon and detailed technical information

Feedback from installation personnel requested:

- Routine facilitation support for RABs or public meetings
- Tools and templates for advertising RABs, community newsletters, social media
- Centralized communications hub
- Augmented Risk Communication Training
- Updates from OSD outreach initiative
- Additional public affairs guidance

View the interim report on the DoD PFAS website Public Outreach page at <https://www.acq.osd.mil/eie/er/ecc/pfas/po/index.html>.



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Environmental Cleanup Communication & Outreach Initiative

Feedback captured during Phase 1 was consistent between communities and stakeholders and informed Phase 2 currently in progress.

Phase 2 activities will continue throughout 2024 and include:

- Integrating public feedback and applying best management practices.
- Developing customizable communication templates and tools.
- Publishing informational instruments to better explain DoD's PFAS cleanup process.
- Developing targeted communication training.
- In-person observations of Open House vs. Town Hall engagements.
- Monitoring public feedback from the online questionnaire.
- Continuous updates and enhancements to the DoD PFAS website.
- Conducting a RAB Rule Handbook review.

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