

What is a PFAS?..and the challenges associated with defining them

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An Article of Interest

https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fenvs.2022.850019/full



ORIGINAL RESEARCH article

Front. Environ. Sci., 05 April 2022 Sec. Toxicology, Pollution and the Environment

https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2022.850019

This article is part of the Research Topic

Environmental Pollution and Toxicity of Emerging Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs)

View all Articles >

Assembly and Curation of Lists of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) to Support Environmental Science Research



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CompTox Chemicals Dashboard



A publicly accessible website delivering access to:

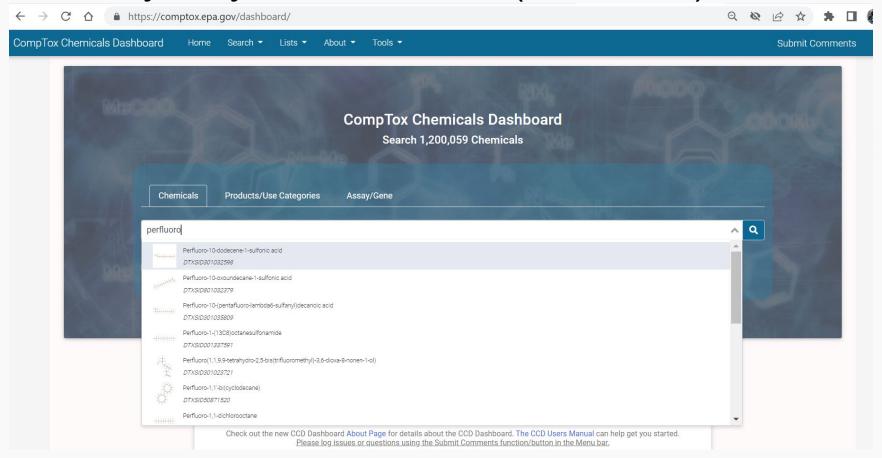
- ~1.2M chemicals with related property data
- Experimental and predicted physicochemical property data
- Experimental Human and Ecological hazard data
- Integration to "biological assay data" for 1000s of chemicals
- Information regarding chemicals in consumer products
- Links to other agency websites and public data resources
- "Literature" search capability for chemicals using public resources
- "Batch searching" for tens to thousands of chemicals
- Over 15,000 of the chemicals are classed as PFAS Chemicals (but be cautious regarding the definition of a PFAS"...)

CompTox Chemicals Dashboard

https://comptox.epa.gov/dashboard



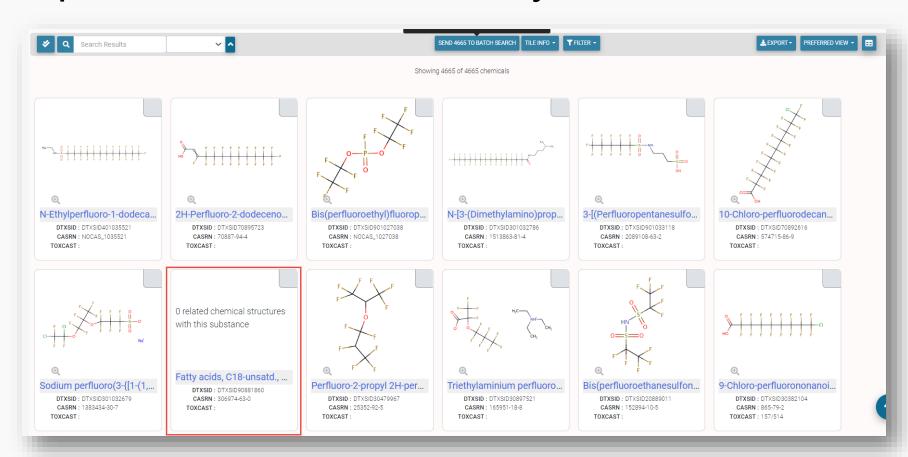
 Searching – CAS Numbers, systematic names and synonyms, structures (as InChls)



Substring search "perfluoro"



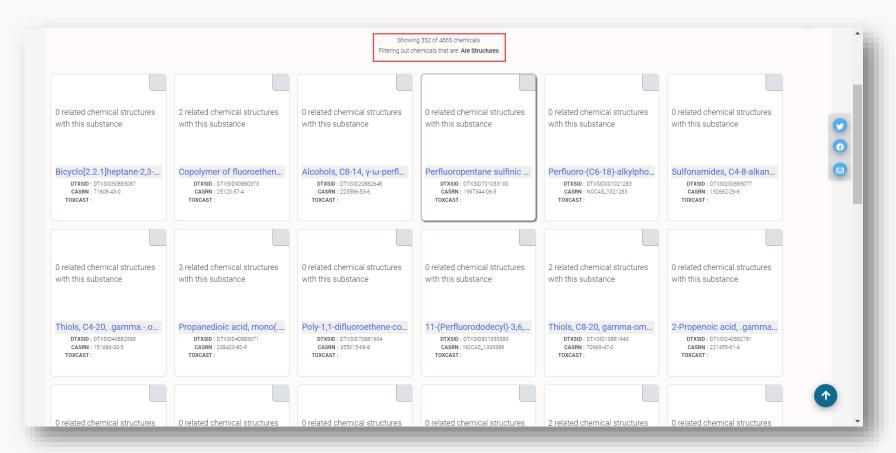
 Substring search ~4665 chemicals. MANY perfluoro names added by our curators



Substring search "perfluoro" "Explicit" structures



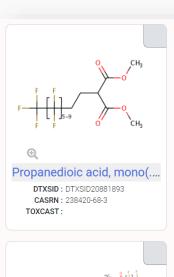
>350 do not have explicit structures...



Substring search "perfluoro" "Markush" representations

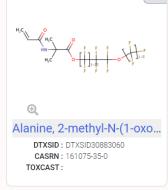


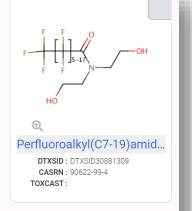
 As of August 2022, there are 328/1340 PFAS Markush representations out of the whole DB

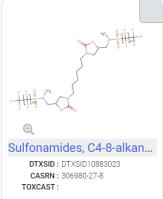


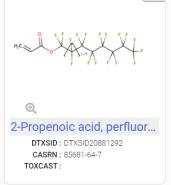


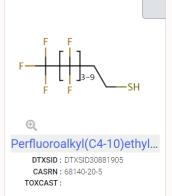




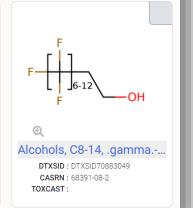








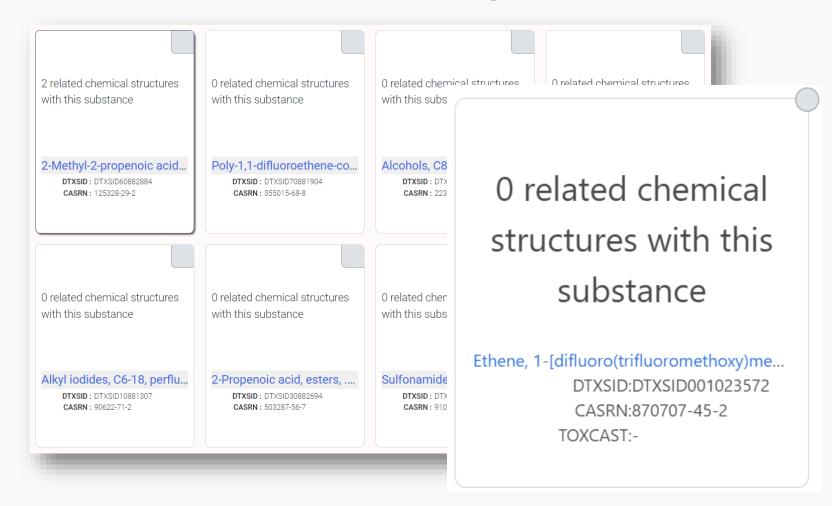




Substring search "perfluoro" "UVCB" chemicals

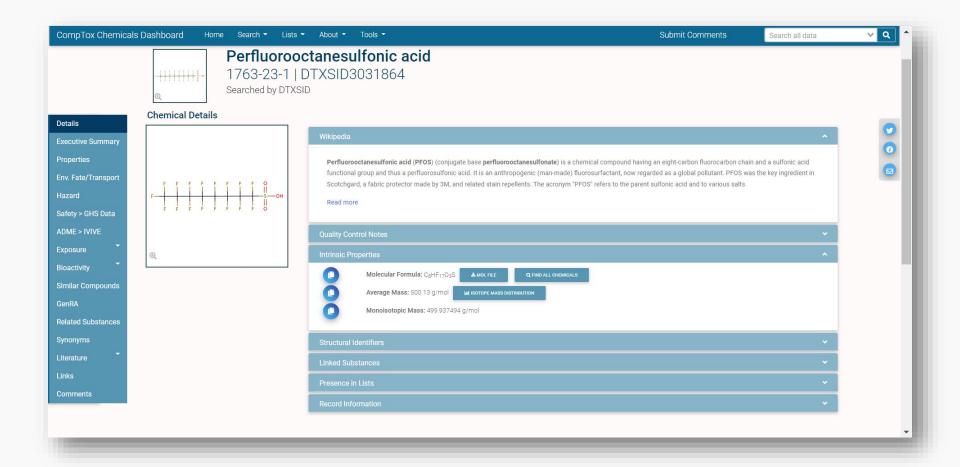


 Unknown or Variable Composition, Complex Reaction Products and Biological Materials



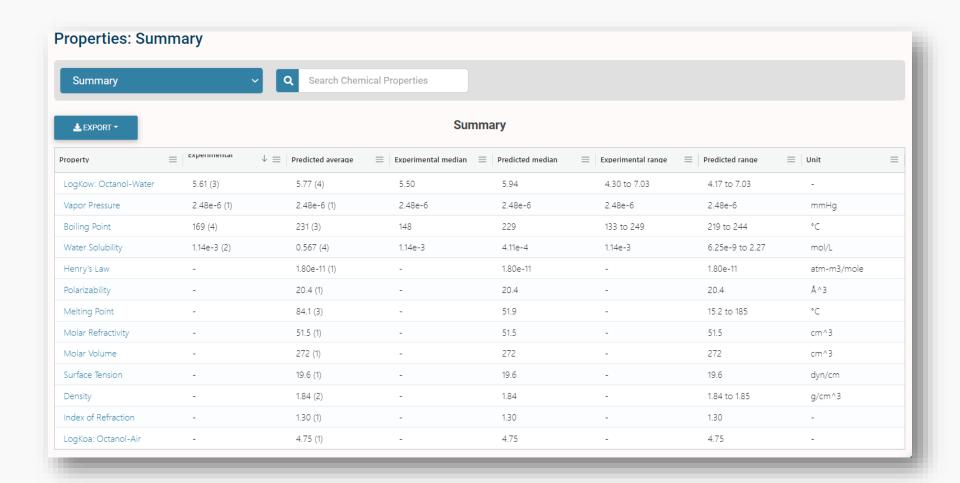
1 of ~1.2M Chemical Pages





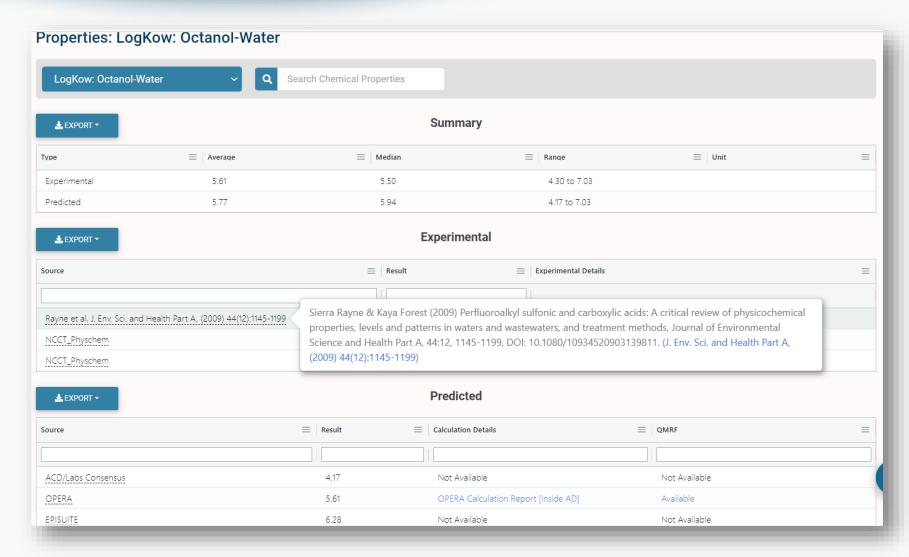
Physicochemical Properties





Experimental Data





Training sets enhanced QSAR



Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry—Volume 39, Number 4—pp. 775–786, 2020 Received: 8 October 2019 | Revised: 30 October 2019 | Accepted: 3 February 2020

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Environmental Chemistry

Property Estimation of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances: A Comparative Assessment of Estimation Methods

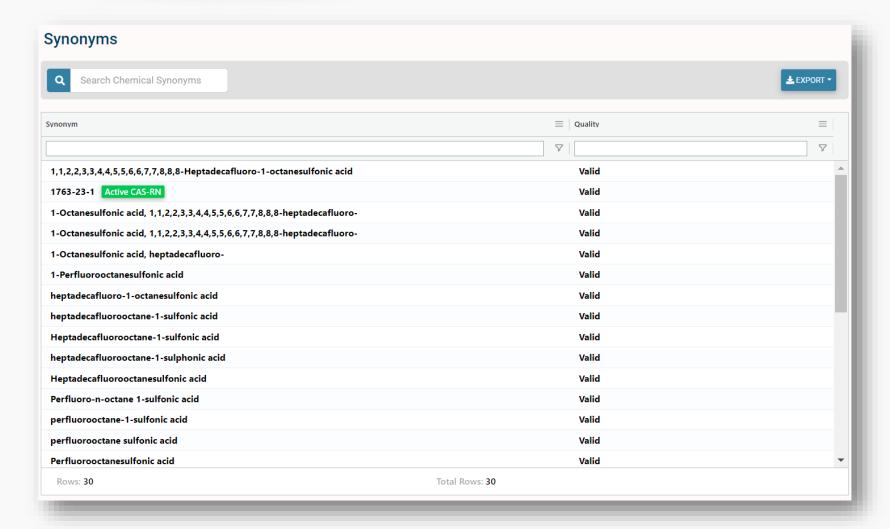
Alina Lampic and J. Mark Parnis*

Chemical Properties Research Group (Canadian Environmental Modelling Centre), Department of Chemistry, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

- Comparison of COSMOtherm, EPI Suite ACD/Labs, TEST and OPERA
- OPERA best performance: Vapor Pressure, Solubility, Octanol-water partitioning, Octanol-Air partitioning, Soil-Adsorption coefficient

What is PFOS Called? Synonyms, CASRNs and more





Substance Relationship Mappings



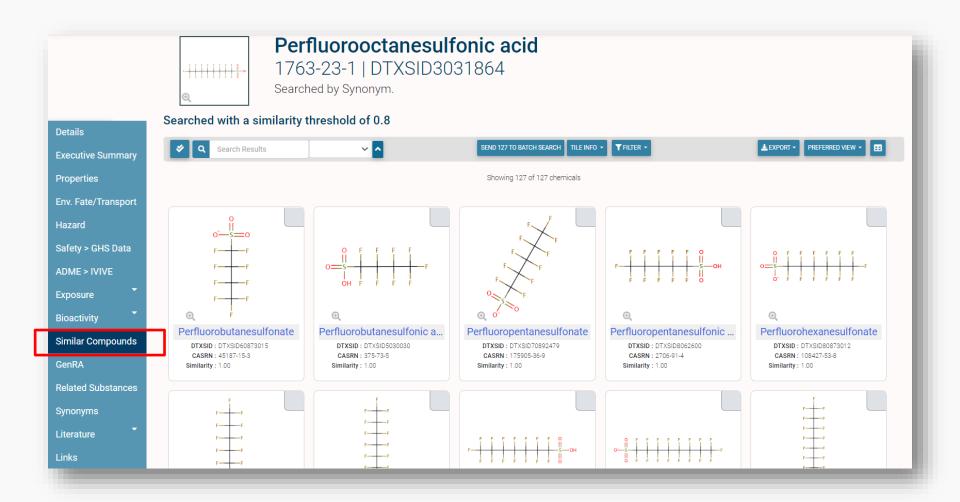
 Similar compounds - based on structure "fingerprints"

 Structure mappings - between parent and salts, multicomponent chemicals, isotopomers

 Related substances – monomer to polymer, parent to transformation products

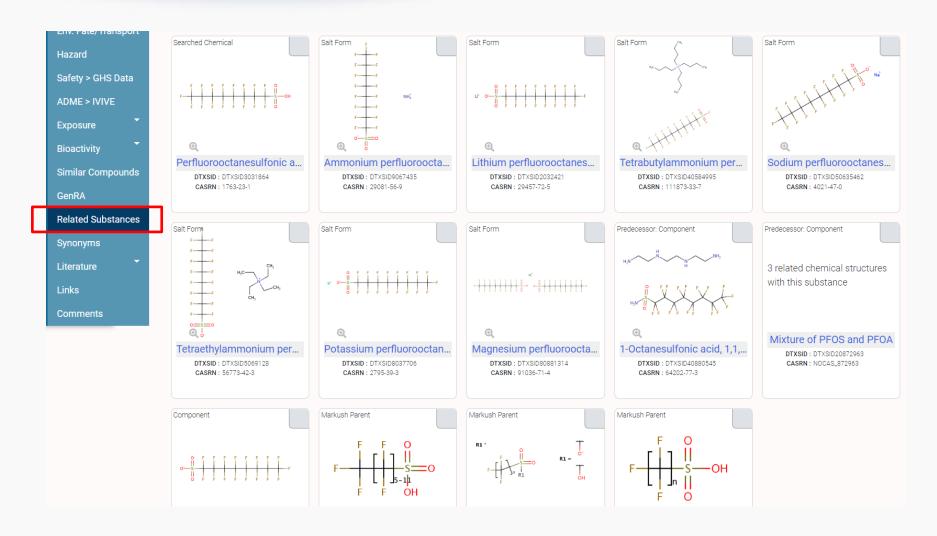
Are there Similar Compounds? 127 chemicals > 0.8 match factor.





Relationships in the data





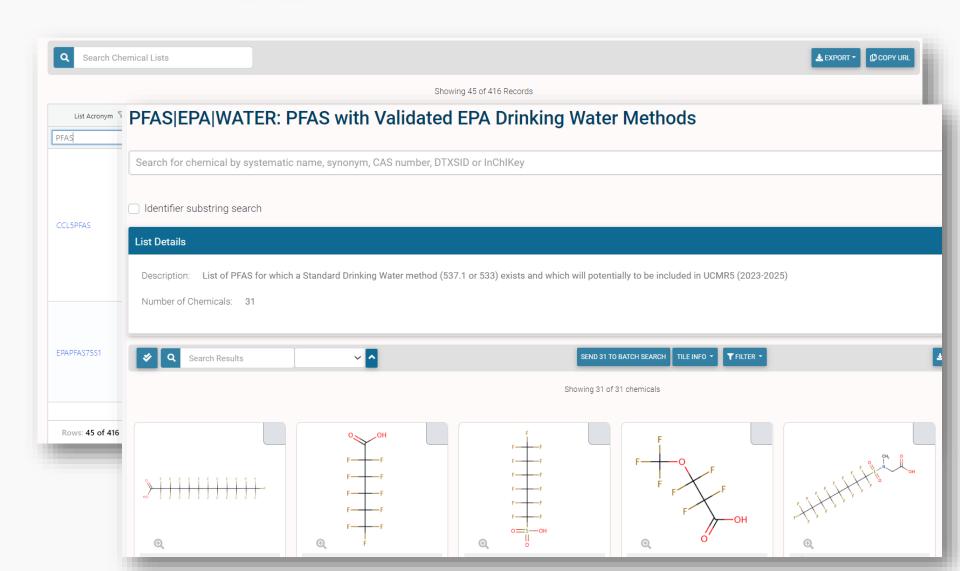


LISTS OF PFAS SUBSTANCES

PFAS Lists of Chemicals (45/416)







Chemical Lists



- Assembled chemical lists give access to curated data
 - Names and synonyms
 - Physicochemical/Fate and Transport data
 - Toxicity data
 - Relationships in the data
 - Regulatory lists

The OECD List of PFAS

http://www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/portal-perfluorinated-chemicals/



Most of this list did NOT have structures!!!



HOME



The OECD releases a new list of PFASs

The OECD releases a new list of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) based on a comprehensive analysis of information available in the public domain. In total, 4730 PFAS-related CAS numbers have been identified and categorised in this study, including several new groups of PFASs that fulfil the common definition of PFASs (i.e. they contain at least one perfluoroalkyl moiety) but have not yet been commonly regarded as PFASs.

This work has been conducted under the OECD/UN Environment Global PFC Group in support of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and shifting to safer alternatives for PFASs.

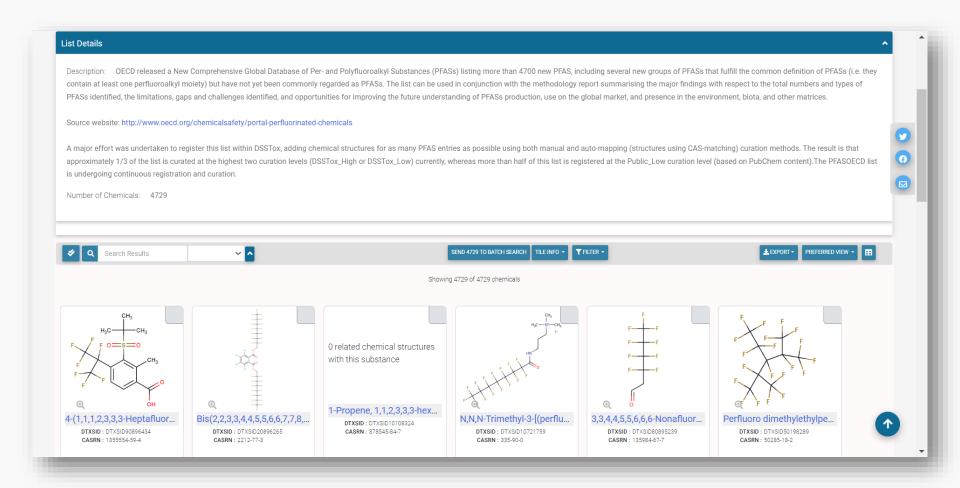
The New Comprehensive Global Database of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) comes with a methodology report also detailing the major findings with respect to the total numbers and types of PFASs identified, the limitations, gaps and challenges identified in the development of the new list, and opportunities for improving the future understanding of PFASs production, use on the global market, and presence in the environment, biota, and other matrices.



The OECD List of PFAS







What is the definition of PFAS now?



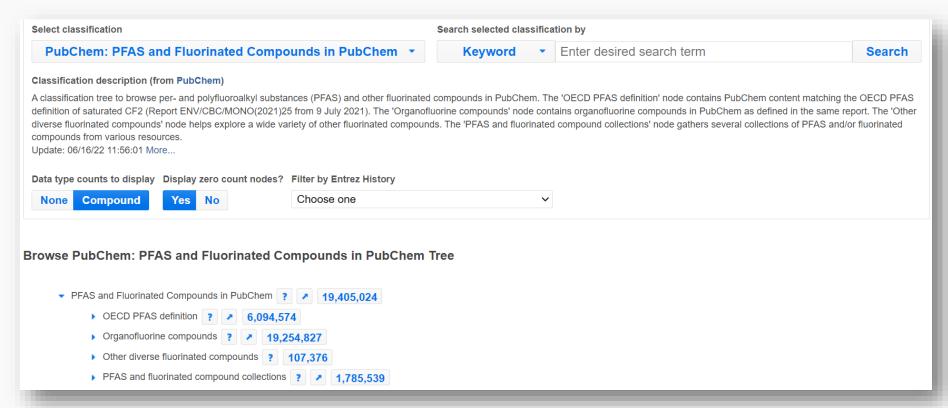
- According to OECD "PFAS are fluorinated substances that contain at least one fully fluorinated methyl or methylene carbon atom (without any H/Cl/Br/l atom attached to it)"
- This means, that "with a few noted exceptions, any chemical with at least a perfluorinated methyl group (–CF3) or a perfluorinated methylene group (–CF2–) is a PFAS."

PubChem PFAS Tree





 Under the overly broad & simple definitions there are MILLIONs of PFAS in PubChem



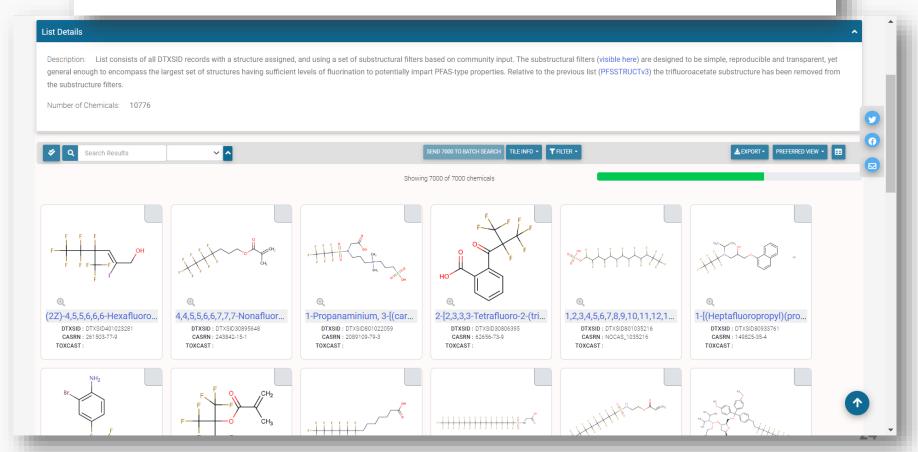
Building a "PFAS List"



- Definitions of PFAS can differ across research groups and scientific publications
- Simple definitions are too all-encompassing but are used to capture small fluorinated chemicals of concern
- No consistent PFAS definition across the scientific community, but areas of heightened concern, e.g.,
 - PFOA, PFOS & chemicals that break down to these PFAS
 - Chemicals or polymers containing C7-C11 linear perfluoro chains
 - Organics with high degree of fluorination relative to carbon
- We employ a structure-based approach for defining membership in PFAS lists
 - Substances containing specific substructural elements

PFAS Structure List v4 (10,776)





But we continue to iterate



Navigation Panel to PFAS Structure Lists

Search for chemical by systematic name, synonym, CAS number, DTXSID of

Identifier substring search

List Details

Description: PFAS Structure lists are versioned iteratively and this description n August 2021). For the versioned lists please use the hyperlinked lists below.

PFASSTRUCTV4 - August 2021 This list

PFASSTRUCTV3 - August 2020

PFASSTRUCTV2 - November 2019

PFASSTRUCTV1 - March 2018

Number of Chemicals: 10776

Building a "PFAS List"



- Definitions of PFAS can differ across research groups and scientific publications
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 - Organics with high degree of fluorination relative to carbon
- We employ a structure-based approach for defining membership in PFAS lists
 - Substances containing specific substructural elements
 - Substances with specific "substrings" to represent PFAS elements in UVCB chemicals

UVCB Chemicals



Chemical Substances of Unknown or Variable Composition, Complex Reaction Products and Biological Materials (UVCB Substance) on the TSCA Inventory

This paper is a compendium of information related to the broad class of chemical substances referred to as UVCBs for the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Chemical Substance Inventory. These chemical substances cannot be represented by unique structures and molecular formulas.

PFAS polymers



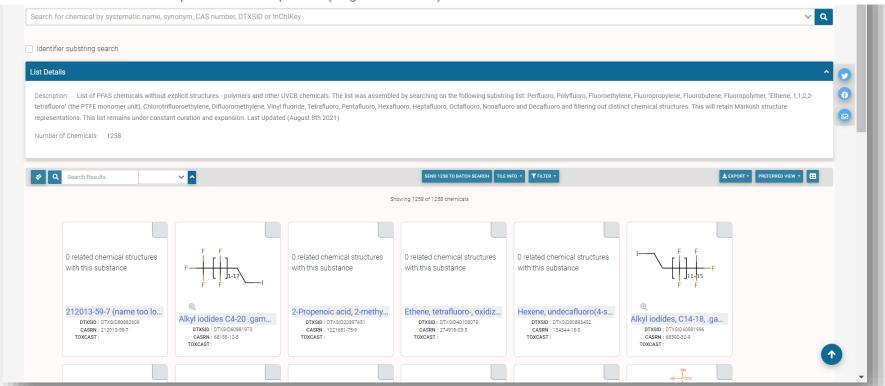
- There are thousands of polymers with PFAS monomeric units
- The process of mapping monomers to polymers requires careful curation efforts
- There are a number of biodegradable PFAS (e.g., food-contact materials)

PFAS "UVCB Chemicals" 1258 in PFASDEV1 list



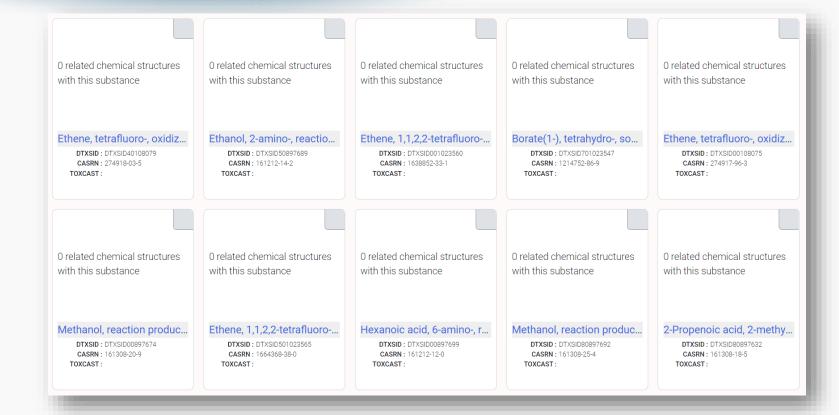
List Details

Description: List of PFAS chemicals without explicit structures - polymers and other UVCB chemicals. The list was assembled by searching on the following substring list: Perfluoro, Polyfluoro, Fluoroethylene, Fluoropropylene, Fluorobutene, Fluoropolymer, "Ethene, 1,1,2,2-tetrafluoro" (the PTFE monomer unit), Chlorotrifluoroethylene, Difluoromethylene, Vinyl fluoride, Tetrafluoro, Pentafluoro, Hexafluoro, Heptafluoro, Octafluoro, Nonafluoro and Decafluoro and filtering out distinct chemical structures. This will retain Markush structure representations. This list remains under constant curation and expansion. Last Updated (August 8th 2021)



Example PFAS-UVCBs



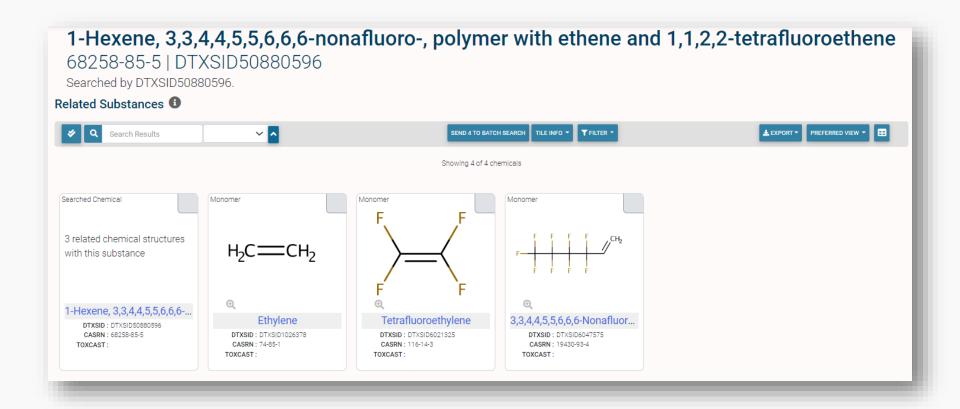


Ethene, tetrafluoro-, oxidized, polymd., reduced, decarboxylated, C6 fraction 274917-96-3 | DTXSID00108075

1-Propene, 1,1,2,3,3,3-hexafluoro-, polymer with 1,1-difluoroethene, ethene, 1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethene and 1,1,2-trifluoro-2-(trifluoromethoxy)ethene

1-Hexene, 3,3,4,4,5,5,6,6,6-nonafluoro-, polymer with ethene and 1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethene





"Markush" Chemical Categories



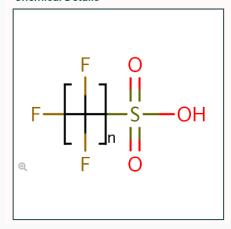
PFOS is a linear perfluoroalkyl sulfonate

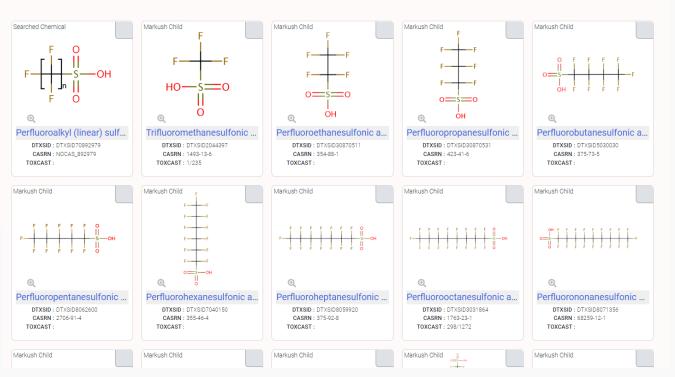


Perfluoroalkyl (linear) sulfonic acids

NOCAS_892979 | DTXSID70892979 Searched by DTXSID70892979.

Chemical Details

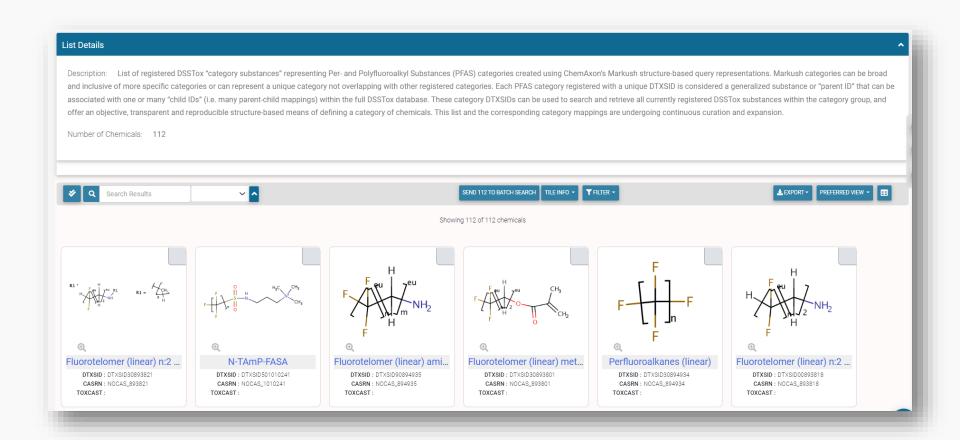




Showing 21 of 21 chemicals

PFAS Categories - evolves as new classes are added





PFAS Categories in Development (112 categories so far... and evolving)

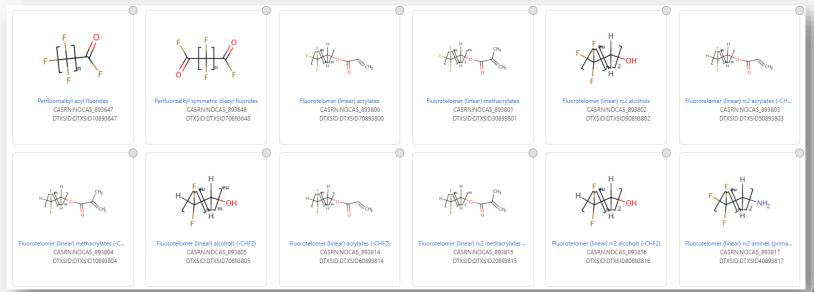


Vol. 127, No. 1 | Brief Communication

A Chemical Category-Based Prioritization Approach for Selecting 75 Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) for Tiered Toxicity and Toxicokinetic Testing

Grace Patlewicz , Ann M. Richard, Antony J. Williams, Christopher M. Grulke, Reeder Sams, Jason Lambert, Pamela D. Noyes, Michael J. DeVito, Ronald N. Hines, Mark Strynar, Annette Guiseppi-Elie, and Russell S. Thomas

Published: 11 January 2019 | CID: 014501 | https://doi.org/10.1289/EHP4555 | Cited by: 17





BATCH SEARCHING

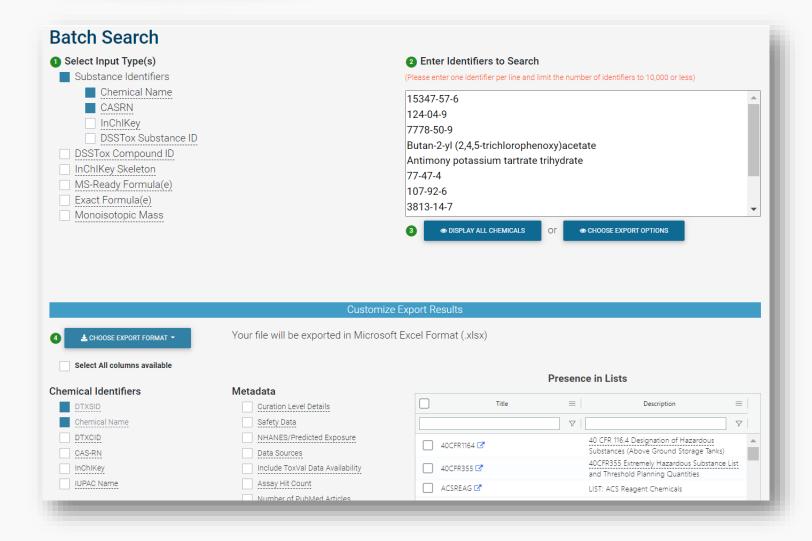
Batch Search



- Search thousands of chemicals based on CASRN, names and identifiers
- Harvest en masse the data available for single chemicals – properties, tox data, chemical relationships, category mappings, presence in lists

Batch Searches





Supporting future work



Four Chemical Trends Will Shape the Next Decade's Directions in Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Research

Matthias Kotthoff* and Mark Bücking

Department Environmental and Food Analysis, Fraunhofer Institute for Molecular Biology and Applied Ecology, Schmallenberg, Germany

- 1. Mobility: A wide and dynamic distribution of short chain PFAS due to their high polarity, persistency and volatility. → QSAR Predictions
- 2. Substitution of regulated substances: The ban or restrictions of individual molecules will lead to a replacement with substitutes of similar concern. → Database content and Markush Enumeration
- 3. Increase in structural diversity of existing PFAS molecules: Introduction of e.g., hydrogens and chlorine atoms instead of fluorine, as well as branching and cross-linking lead to a high versatility of unknown target molecules. → Database content
- 4. Unknown "Dark Matter": The amount, identity, formation pathways, and transformation dynamics of polymers and PFAS precursors are largely unknown. → Working with agency analytical scientists and collaborators to link and host data

Conclusions



- CompTox Chemicals Dashboard supports PFAS research at EPA in numerous ways
 - Delivery of curated lists of PFAS chemicals (growing)
 - Flexible search capabilities support for Mass Spec
 - Relationships in the data enrich navigation between chemicals
- Ongoing research efforts for PFAS chemicals
 - Continue harvesting physicochemical & fate and transport data
 - Classification approaches and Markush representations
 - Expand available toxicity data and integration to systematic review data as it becomes available

If you want ALL of the details...

https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fenvs.2022.850019/full



ORIGINAL RESEARCH article

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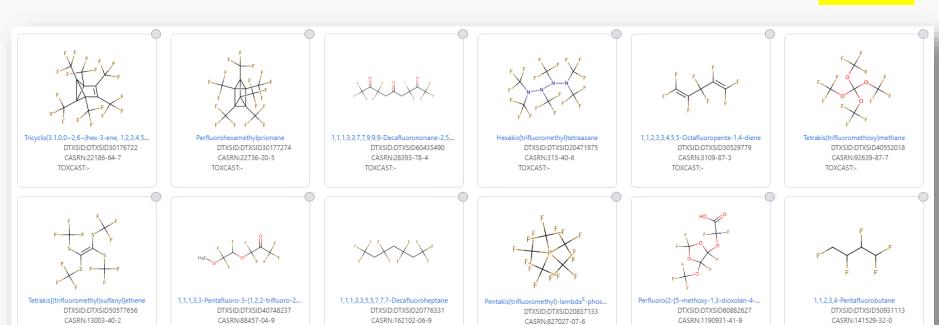
The story isn't over....

TOXCAST:-

TOXCAST:-



- Latest dashboard release >1.2M substances
- New PFASSTRUCTv5 list, adjusting definition to address missed chemicals: ~15k



TOXCAST:-

TOXCAST:-

TOXCAST:-

The New Definition Paper in press



30% F based on fraction of molecular formula excluding H

- For example, for $C_6HF_9O_6$, the F percent excluding H contained in the formula would be 9F/(6C + 9F + 6O) = 42%
- OECD (2021) argued against using a weight percent F, but this is a simply a count percent and excludes atomic weight

Or contains one of four substructures

- For substructure 4, Q can be B, O, N, P, S, or Si

I know a PFAS when I see one



Justice Potter Stewart, in concurring on the decision in Jacobellis v. Ohio, 378 U.S. 184, stated "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that."

Structures Included in Proposed New Definition

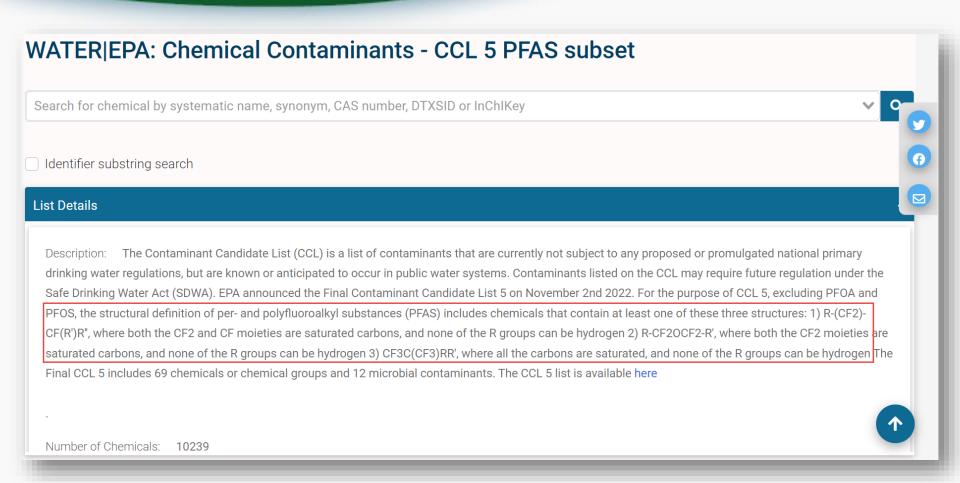


Structures Included in Proposed New Definition



PFASCCL5...another tweak





 Don't worry about the details – definitions can be adjusted

For More Information



- The research discussed in this presentation is part of EPA's overall efforts to rapidly expand the scientific foundation for understanding and managing risk from PFAS.
- For more information on EPA's efforts to address PFAS, please visit the following websites
 - EPA PFAS Action Plan https://www.epa.gov/pfas/epas-pfas-action-plan
 - EPA PFAS Research https://www.epa.gov/chemical-research/research-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas

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- CCTE colleagues Ann Richard, Grace Patlewicz, Charlie Lowe, Nate Charest
- CCTE Curation Team
- Linda Gaines, EPA-OLEM

Contact

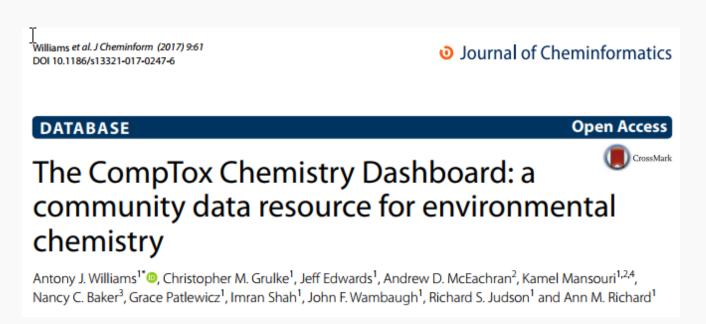


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https://doi.org/10.1186/s13321-017-0247-6