



# SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING QUICK GUIDE: FIREFIGHTING FOAM

*Ecology Center and Safer States' Sustainable Purchasing Quick Guides are a series of fact sheets highlighting sustainable purchasing options for high volume, high impact products. They are designed to help cities, counties, and states create safer communities through the purchase of more environmentally and socially conscious products.*

## Why Firefighting Foam?

Class B firefighting foam is used to extinguish gasoline, oil, and jet fuel fires. It is also a significant source of per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination. PFAS are a class of toxic chemicals that are called 'forever chemicals' because they don't break down in the environment. There is an established link between PFAS exposure and adverse health effects such as cancer, immunotoxicity, and reproductive issues. PFAS are impossible to avoid as they're found in drinking water, soil, consumer products, food, and wildlife. When PFAS-containing class B firefighting foams are used, PFAS sinks through the soil and into groundwater or runs off into rivers and streams. Switching to PFAS-free class B firefighting foams reduces this significant source of PFAS contamination.

## Solutions: Municipalities Taking Action

Safe and effective alternatives do exist! The GreenScreen Certified™ standard for firefighting foam is the world's first certification for fluorine-free firefighting foam. Foams certified by GreenScreen are free of PFAS and over 2,000 other toxic chemicals. As municipalities switch to PFAS-free firefighting foams, it is important to safely label and store any remaining PFAS-containing foams until safe disposal is available.

States like [Colorado](#) have banned PFAS-containing foams for training purposes and restricted their use for fire suppression. Even if not required by law, some municipal fire departments, like [Ann Arbor, MI](#) and [Madison, WI](#), have opted to switch to PFAS-free foams. Michigan's Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy launched a pickup and storage [program](#) for firefighting foams that contain PFAS to ensure proper disposal.

## Benefits

Switching to PFAS-free firefighting foams reduces a significant source of PFAS contamination and a serious health hazard for people and the environment, ultimately making communities safer. It also eliminates the liability of using PFAS-containing foams and prevents future cleanup costs. The cost to clean up a single site contaminated with PFAS from firefighting foam can range from [\\$5 million to \\$62 million](#).

## Tools and Resources

- [GreenScreen Certified Products](#); PFAS-free firefighting foams certified by GreenScreen
- [IC2 Alternatives Assessment Library](#); Firefighting foams that do not contain PFAS
- [IPEN Fluorine-free firefighting foams viable alternatives to fluorinated aqueous film-forming foams](#); Viable fluorine-free alternatives
- [Ecology Center Directory of Sustainable Purchasing: Firefighting Foam](#); Directory of resources for sustainable purchasing of firefighting foams