



2.5 PFAS Uses

PFAS have been produced on a commercial scale since the 1950s, and production continues today. The unique physical and chemical properties of PFAS impart oil, water, stain, and soil repellency, chemical and temperature resistance, friction reduction, and surfactant properties to a wide range of products.

[Table 2-4](#) provides a general (not exhaustive) introduction to some of the uses of PFAS fluorochemistries that are, or have been, marketed or used ([3M Company 1999a](#)) ([Poulsen 2005](#)) ([OECD 2006](#)) ([Washington State Department of Ecology 2012](#)) ([OECD 2011](#)) ([OECD 2013](#)) ([Fujii, Harada, and Koizumi 2013](#)) ([OECD 2015b](#)) ([FluoroCouncil 2018](#)) ([Henry et al. 2018](#)). The specific applications for all PFAS are not well documented in the public realm. For example, of the 2,000 PFAS identified in a 2015 study, only about half had an associated listed use ([KEMI 2015b](#)). Further discussion of select uses that may be associated with potentially significant environmental releases are provided in [Section 2.6](#).

As discussed in [Section 2.2.2.1](#), most polymer PFAS are considered to pose relatively less risk to human health and the environment than some nonpolymer PFAS. For this reason, [Table 2-4](#) distinguishes between these two major classes of PFAS and where they are used in various industries and products. The major industries and applications summarized in the table are described in more detail in [Section 2.6.1](#).

Table 2-4. Sample historic and current uses of PFAS

Industry/Application	PFAS Type	Documented Use and Examples of Some PFAS
Aviation and Aerospace	Polymer	Mechanical components made of fluoropolymers (such as PTFE and PFA tubing, piping, seals, gaskets, cables, and insulators)
	Nonpolymers	Hydraulic fluid additives made from PFSA salts (such as PFOS at about 0.1%) to prevent evaporation, fires, and corrosion
Automotive	Polymer	Mechanical components made of fluoropolymers, including wiring and cable, fuel delivery tubing, seals, bearings, gaskets and lubricants, and some polymer coatings on carpets
	Nonpolymers	Surface treatment for textiles, upholsteries, carpets, leather and exterior surfaces
Biocides (Herbicides and Pesticides)	Polymer	None reported
	Nonpolymers	Active ingredients such as short-chain sulfonamides in plant growth regulators and herbicides, and EtFOSA (sulfluramid) in ant and termite baits; inert enhancing ingredients in pesticides; PFPAs and PFPiAs as anti-foaming agents in solutions
Building and Construction	Polymer	Fluoropolymer membranes and coatings (such as PTFE, PVDF, and/or side-chain fluorinated polymers) in architectural materials (like fabrics, roofing membranes, metals, stone, tiles, concrete, radomes); adhesives, seals, caulks; additives in paints (for example, low- and no-VOC latex paints), varnishes, dyes, stains, sealants; surface treatment agent and laminates for conserving landmarks
	Nonpolymers	Additives in paints, coatings, and surface treatments (PASf- and fluorotelomer-based compounds, ammonium salt of PFHxA)
Cable and Wiring	Polymer	Coatings and jacketings made of fluoropolymers (such as PTFE and PVDF) for weathering, flame, and soil resistance, with cables used in many applications, including communication facilities, antennae, and computer networks
	Nonpolymers	None reported
Cosmetics/Personal Care Products	Polymer	Dental floss and micro powders used in creams and lotions.
	Nonpolymers	Cosmetics, shampoos, nail polish, eye makeup, denture cleaners

Industry/Application	PFAS Type	Documented Use and Examples of Some PFAS
Electronics	Polymer	Fluoropolymers (such as PVDF and PTFE) used in insulators, solder sleeves, printed circuit boards, cell phones, computers, speakers, and transducers
	Nonpolymers	Flame retardants for polycarbonate resin (such as the potassium salt of PFBS)
Energy	Polymer	Fluoropolymer films (such as FEP, PVDF) to cover solar panel collectors, electrolyte fuel cells, PTFE expansion joint materials for power plants
	Nonpolymers	Fuel cell and battery electrolyte (such as the lithium salt of PFAAs)
Firefighting/Safety	Polymer	Fluoropolymers used in firefighting equipment and protective clothing (such as those woven with PTFE). Other polymer coatings using side-chain fluorinated polymers)
	Nonpolymers	Coatings and materials used as water repellents and some Class B foam (may contain PFCAs, PFSAs, and fluorotelomer-based derivatives), vapor suppression for flammable liquids (for example, gasoline storage)
Food Processing	Polymer	Fluoropolymer fabrication materials (such as PTFE) (liners for trays, ovens, grills)
	Nonpolymers	May be used as coatings on food packaging
Household Products	Polymer	Nonstick coatings (fluoropolymers such as PTFE); aftermarket treatment for textiles, upholsteries, carpets, and leather (such as FT-based side-chain fluorinated polymers)
	Nonpolymers	Aftermarket treatment for textiles, upholsteries, carpets, and leather (such as PASFs; floor polishes (such as the ammonium salt of PFDA), coatings, and floor finishes (PFPA and PFPIAs) and cleaning agents and alkaline cleaners; automobile waxes; may include PFAAs, PASF- and fluorotelomer-based derivatives
Medical Products	Polymer	Fluoropolymers used in surgical patches, cardiovascular grafts, raw materials for human body implants (such as catheters, stents, needles, and other) given biocompatibility and extremely low coefficient of friction
	Nonpolymers	X-ray film, stain- and water-repellent protective medical fabrics (like surgical drapes and gowns) created from PASF- or fluorotelomer-based (meth)acrylate polymers and polyurethanes
Metal Plating	Polymer	None reported
	Nonpolymers	Wetting agent, mist suppression for harmful vapors, and surfactants (may include potassium, lithium, diethanolamine and ammonium salts of PFOS or 6:2 FTS)
Oil Production	Polymer	Lining of gas pipes
	Nonpolymers	Marketed for and potential instances of use in oil well production
Mining	Polymer	None reported
	Nonpolymers	Instances of surfactants used in ore mining flotation
Paper and Packaging	Polymer	Oil and grease and water repellent to paper, paperboard, molded pulp products (including food contact materials), and LDPE bags; examples include side-chain fluorinated polymers in which the PASF- or fluorotelomer-based alcohols or their acrylate or methacrylate esters are attached on side chains
	Nonpolymers	Phosphate ester salts (esterification of PASF or FT-based alcohols with phosphoric acid; PFPEs
PFAS Production	Polymer	Not applicable
	Nonpolymers	Emulsion polymerization processing aids for fluoropolymers (such as PTFE, FEP, PFA, PVDF), (co)monomer of side-chain fluorinated polymers; (co)monomer of fluoropolymers and to make fluoroelastomers; may use salts of long-chain PFCAs (such as PFOA and PFNA), salts of short-chain PFCAs (such as PFHxA), or PFECAs

Industry/Application	PFAS Type	Documented Use and Examples of Some PFAS
Photolithography & Semiconductor	Polymer	Equipment raw materials (such as PFA) for molded wafer baskets to handle corrosive liquids and gases, use as fluids in mechanical vacuum pumps
	Nonpolymers	Photolithography (such as using PFOS) in manufacture of semiconductor chips
Textiles (Upholstery, Carpets), Leather, and Apparel	Polymer	Fluoropolymers (such as PTFE) are used in the construction of outdoor gear, clothing, and housewares; side-chain fluorinated polymers (such as PASF- or fluorotelomer-based (meth)acrylate polymers and -polyurethanes) may be used in oil- and water-repellent and stain release finishing and treatment coatings
	Nonpolymers	PFOA-based chromium treatment for paper and leather. Nonpolymer coatings used to treat textiles to provide oil- and water- repellent and stain release finishes

Information presented in this table captures potential instances of use but is not intended to indicate universal use. In addition, the table is not exhaustive of PFAS use in various industries.

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