



OCT 21 2019

**TOWN OF MERRIMACK
TOWN COUNCIL'S OFFICE**

October 15, 2019

(reprinted on October 16, 2019 with correction to spellings in cc)

Mr. Thomas P. Koenig
Chairman, Merrimack Town Council
6 Baboosic Lake Road
Merrimack, NH 03054

Dear Mr. Koenig,

In connection with the letter we received from you on October 7, 2019, which was dated September 30, 2019, I hope that we can correct the record and help clarify key points for the Town Council.

First and foremost, Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics is part of a company with a 354-year-old history. Our longevity comes in part because we recognize the importance of being good stewards and partners to the communities where our people live and work. As we have since first learning about the presence of PFAS in groundwater in some areas near our facility, we are working transparently and cooperatively with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and other partners in our response.

In addition to working with NHDES and Town of Merrimack staff, we have worked with the EPA's Office of Research and Development, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, the Towns of Bedford, Litchfield and Manchester and three separate water utilities. Our work to date is only possible due to these partnerships. We have worked voluntarily and cooperatively with all of these entities on a wide range of issues to better understand the situation we face together and to implement solutions.

An important part of this effort, especially with the NHDES and the EPA's ORD, involves technical efforts to improve the sampling, method development, and reliability of testing for PFAS compounds in different media (air, soil, water, raw materials, etc.). We have voluntarily supported technical research and development efforts by state and federal agencies to validate, improve, and establish new sampling methods to advance the analytical science of PFAS compounds.

When one is trying to gather samples from a wide range of media and make measurements at the 0.00000001% concentration level (10 ppt), significant rigor and understanding of how measurements are made is required in order to have the proper context to interpret the results. One cannot simply assume that the measurement of PFAS compounds in air, water, soil, solids, etc. are all the same and have the same detection limits, sampling approaches, analyses methods, accuracy, instrumentation errors, etc. This is particularly true for PFAS compounds which are ubiquitous and in some cases don't even have analytical standards.

This brings us to the major concern cited in your letter to us, in your letter dated September 30th to the NHDES, and in some statements made to the press. The conclusion by the Town Council that Saint-Gobain has increased its use of PFOA at our plant in Merrimack is inaccurate and was primarily based on very select results that, frankly, were taken out of context. These misstatements create unnecessary alarm among residents. Also, your call to shut down our operations, based on these misstatements about select results, has also been difficult

for the nearly 200 employees of our Merrimack facility, who come to work every day and create high performance materials used to make important products ranging from hazmat suits for firefighters and body armor for our military, to the roofs of well-known American and international public spaces and landmarks.

We understand that emotions around PFAS may run high, but as you note in your letter, Saint-Gobain has strived to be proactive in its response and take a leadership position on remediation. We take any allegations to the contrary extremely seriously. So, it's very important that any statements made concerning our actions and operations are based in facts.

Because only very select data points were presented to you, it was not possible for the Town Council to have the proper context of the overall work and other important factors (detection limits, reliability limits, sampling limits, etc.) required to obtain a full understanding of the information. Of particular concern was that the limited data presented included results from analyses that did not meet laboratory quality standards, thus skewing the picture in a manner that led you to create an incorrect and very unfortunate narrative.

The dip pan data cited in your letter is from a sample analysis that showed instrumentation error – to clarify, the results are not getting worse – this statement is not accurate. Out of eleven (11) samples taken in the dip pans, nine (9) showed PFOA at non-detect (below the detection limit of the method) and two sample runs encountered instrumentation error in the PFOA analysis. This was discussed in detail and highlighted in the report with these results. It is not appropriate to look at a data point which encountered method errors as accurate and representative of the situation. We are committed to transparency and are trying to learn more about testing methods, so even data that is flagged outside of laboratory quality control limits are fully reported to NHDES. It was this data that you reference in your letter and was used to make the assertions in your letter.

We also remind you that Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics never manufactured PFOA or PTFE. Our suppliers committed to the phase out of PFOA in their manufacturing processes of PTFE raw materials in connection with the US [EPA stewardship program](#), which was scheduled to be completed in 2015. Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics worked with our suppliers in advance of this 2015 deadline.

Concerning the outfall to the Merrimack River, the context missing from the presentation made to the Town Council on September 26 is that the full data set shows overall consistent readings both upriver and downriver from the outfall – the data do not show increasing levels of PFAS in the Merrimack River in the vicinity of our plant. These and other points were communicated to Town of Merrimack staff in an August 29 meeting at which SGPP and NHDES staff answered a number of staff members' questions about site investigation and remediation activities.

It is critically important that we have an open dialogue with you and work cooperatively to resolve issues as best we can. For instance, we worked cooperatively with staff from the Town's wastewater treatment facility to voluntarily and proactively install filtration inside our facility to remove PFAS from process water discharges. There is no regulation that would require this type of treatment for process water, yet we have installed a treatment system that goes above and beyond even drinking water standards for PFAS.



In the future, if information provided to the Town Council from any source does not seem to match what we ourselves have said in the public or to you directly, please know you can always contact us and we would be happy to meet in person to review any report – especially if it helps clarify uncertainty.

As you may be aware, even before the September Town Council meeting, we were working with Town staff to arrange a time in early October for Town representatives to tour our facility to learn more about our operations and the status of the investigation. As measurement technologies and the understanding of these materials evolve, we believe this dialogue is the best path forward on this issue and the invitation to Town representatives still stands. Although the Council has not yet accepted our invitation, we hope that you will find the time to come and meet with us.

We want the residents of Merrimack to know that we remain focused on maintaining our leadership role on this issue and being a positive place to work for our people as one of the largest employers in Merrimack.

We have seen the NHDES response from October 8 to your letter to them. On behalf of our 200 employees, we are pleased that the NHDES agrees that there is no basis to shut down our plant operations.

Thank you,



Thomas G. Kinisky
CEO, Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics

cc: (corrected spellings*)

Christopher T. Sununu, Governor of New Hampshire
Robert Scott, Commissioner, NHDES
Clark Freise, Assistant Commissioner, NHDES
Executive Councilor Debora Pignatelli*
Senator Shannon Chandley*
Minority Leader Richard Hinch
Representative Richard Barry
Representative Robert L'Heureux
Representative Nancy Murphy
Representative Jeanine Notter
Representative Rosemarie Rung
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