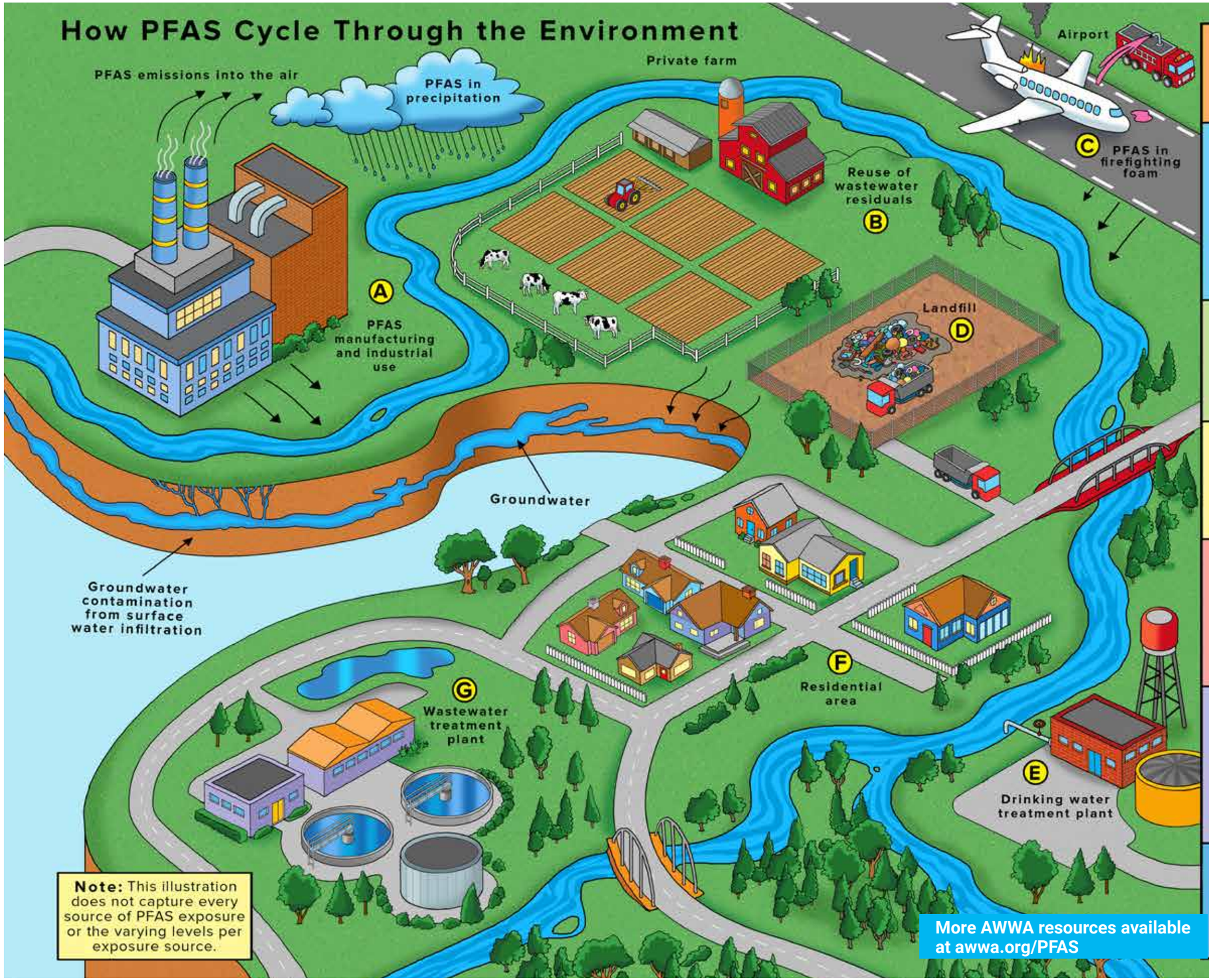
How PFAS Cycle Through the Environment



A PFAS, which are unregulated in industrial discharges, enter the environment through air, surface water and groundwater.

B Nutrient-rich materials that remain after wastewater treatment and testing are used on farms as low-cost fertilizers. Significant contributions to wastewater from nearby industrial sites can lead to elevated PFAS levels in the residual materials that can seep into groundwater if not removed during treatment.

C Firefighting foams containing PFAS were previously used at airports, military bases and training sites. In some sites, the runoff migrated through soil into surface and groundwater.

D At older landfill sites, wastewater containing dissolved and suspended materials from contaminated waste may have leached into groundwater or entered surface water.

E New technologies have enabled recent detection of PFAS in drinking water supplies. Water treatment facilities that hadn't previously known of PFAS in their water supplies are determining the most effective treatments for removal.

F PFAS were used in common household products such as non-stick cookware, shampoo, food containers and paint. Because they don't easily break down, PFAS can accumulate in the human body and end up in source water and drinking water.

G Liquid waste that seeps from landfills and wastewater are treated at wastewater plants, but PFAS may remain in the water after treatment and contaminate groundwater.

More AWWA resources available at awwa.org/PFAS