

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
DRAFT LEAFLET

PCBs AND YOU

Do YOU dismantle or replace old electrical equipment, including switchgear, transformers and capacitors?

This equipment may contain chemicals called PCBs which can harm YOUR health.

Do YOU know how to work safely with PCBs?

Is YOUR health at risk? ——— Stupid question!

Make sure YOU know what to do before YOU start work.

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS (PCBs) could damage your health and seriously harm the environment. Because PCBs can cause such severe damage to the environment their use in new plant and equipment was banned by an international agreement in 1986. Existing equipment containing PCBs must be registered with a licensed disposal company by 1995, and the PCBs destroyed by 1999.

What are PCBs?

There was less awareness of the health and environmental effects of PCBs. They were introduced to overcome the risk of fire with previously-used materials at a time when chemical PCBs are a family of chemicals which are good insulators for both heat and electricity. They are chemically stable and of low volatility. You may find them referred to as ASKARELS or under a trade name. Examples of trade names of PCBs are at the end of this leaflet.

Where will I find PCBs ?

PCBs were used as dielectric filler fluids in some types of electrical equipment such as transformers, switchgear, capacitors and in the starter units of fluorescent lights and fractional horse power motors. Some equipment is labelled as containing PCBs but if you come across old equipment with no identifying label you should check with:

- 1) your employer;
- 2) the manufacturer or owner of the equipment; or
- 3) the Federation of British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers Association (BEAMA). You can contact BEAMA at 8 Leicester Street, London WC2 7BN.

Phone or Fax number

You should assume that any capacitor manufactured before 1976 contains PCBs unless you have information to the contrary. Even if the PCBs have been replaced by another fluid, significant amounts of PCBs may still be present so always check with your employer if you are in any doubt.

How can they enter my body?

PCBs can enter your body in three ways:

- By direct contact with the skin. PCBs pass easily through intact skin, so this is likely to be the main way they get into your body.
- By breathing in fumes, spray or droplets if PCB-containing equipment is being cut or heated.
- By swallowing PCBs if you eat, drink or smoke in the workplace.

If you are continuously exposed to PCBs they can gradually build up in your body.

How can they affect my health?

If PCBs get into your body they can cause a skin condition called chloracne. In animals PCBs can cause damage to the liver and reduce the ability to fight infection. These effects could occur in humans.

What precautions should I take?

All PCB-containing equipment should be checked regularly for signs of PCB leakage. If leakage occurs you should obtain the assistance of a specialist contractor immediately. The Federation of British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers Association (BEAMA) can provide details of suitable contractors.

Phone no. ?

Your manager should advise you what to do if PCBs are spilt. You should not deal with spilt PCBs unless your employer has trained you to do this, and given you a method to follow.

The spilt PCBs should be absorbed with sawdust, sand or earth, then placed in a closeable container ready for disposal by a licensed company.

You should wear the following personal protective equipment:

An impervious boilersuit or overalls.

Heavy duty polythene or PVC gauntlets and overshoes.

NOTE: *Rubber and neoprene are not resistant to PCBs.*

You need to wear a respirator if there is a possibility of producing spray or droplets or if the PCBs are likely to be heated, such as by flame cutting or welding. If your respirator does not have chemical resistant eye protection then you should wear chemical resistant goggles or visor.

NOTE: *Your respirator should contain a filter which meets the standard of EN 141. Check with your employer if you are in doubt.*

How do I dispose of PCBs?

PCBs, PCB waste and equipment containing PCBs must **only** be disposed of by specialist contracting firms who hold a licence from the Department of the Environment. The National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors (NAWDC) can provide a list of licensed contractors. The NAWDC can be contacted at 6-20 Elizabeth Street, London SW1W 9RB. Telephone 071 824 882

You must not dispose of PCB waste by pouring it into drains, onto land or by burning, other than in a licensed incinerator.

Are there any relevant laws?

Yes, there are several laws which apply to PCBs:

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of all their employees at work. You are required to co-operate with your employer, for example by using safety equipment and working methods as instructed.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH) place duties on your employer to :

- assess the risks to your health from PCBs and the measures which are needed to protect your health.
- ensure that your exposure to PCBs is either prevented, or if this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled
- ensure that control measures are adequate and that you use them
- monitor your exposure
- provide you with information on the risks of PCBs and the steps which are necessary to protect your health

You also have duties under COSHH to:

- co-operate with your employer
- use protective measures and to report any defects

There are other laws which apply to how PCBs can be used and how they must be destroyed. If you need further information, please contact your local HSE office, as suggested below.

Where can I get more information?

Your local HSE office will provide more advice and information on work involving PCBs. It is listed under Health and Safety Executive in the local telephone directory. If you are worried that you may have absorbed PCBs through working with them, you can obtain confidential advice from the Employment Medical Advisory Service, who can be contacted through your local HSE office.

For information on how to dispose of PCBs, you should contact the Department of the Environment.

APPENDIX

PCB trade names.

Mixtures of substances containing PCBs are often referred to by trade names including the following:

APIROLIO, AROCLOR, ARUBREN, ASBESTOL, BAKOLA 131, BICLOR, CHLOREXTOL, CLOPHEN, CHLORINOL, CLORPHEN, DIACLOR, DUCONOL, DYKANOL, DK, ELEMEX, EUCAREL, FENCOLOR, HIVAR, HYDOL, INERTEEN, KANECLOR, NO-FLAMOL, PHENOCOLOR, PYRALENE, PYRANOL, PYDRAUL, PYROCLOR, SAF-T-KUHL, SICLONYL, SOLVOL.