

Environment Bulletin



Polychlorinated Biphenyls

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Overview

PCBs are Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), man-made organic compounds that were frequently used as dielectric insulation and coolant fluids in electrical equipment and which pose serious risks to humans and the environment due to their toxic properties.

There have been a number of incidents where PCB contaminated equipment has not been managed in accordance with the processes in NR/L2/ENV/120 and NR/L2/ENV/123.

The 'Responsible Manager' for managing assets within business units must be identified and documented by the head of each business unit (e.g., Infrastructure Director, Capital Delivery Director, Infrastructure Maintenance Delivery Managers or equivalent). It is the duty of the 'Responsible Manager' to check and confirm that all equipment and transformers contaminated with PCBs are included in local registers and, as required, the central Network Rail PCB register through emailing PCBdocuments@networkrail.co.uk.

Labelling PCBs

Any PCB contaminated equipment/fluid (oil) must be labelled in accordance with NR/L2/ENV/123 and a sign shall also be attached to the premises where the equipment is used, stating that the premises contains equipment contaminated with PCBs. These labels shall be maintained to state:

- A) The presence of PCBs.
- B) Their listing on the central register;
- C) The date of identification; and
- D) The date of the last inspection

Disposing of PCBs

PCB contaminated equipment/fluids (oils), as well as any protective clothing that has been contaminated with PCBs, shall be disposed of as hazardous/special waste in accordance with NR/L2/ENV/120. Responsible managers must confirm that:

- Risk assessments are in place for activities involving PCB substances
- Only trained personnel inspect and handle PCB contaminated assets/substances.
- All waste produced is identified using the European Waste Catalogue (EWC) or List of Wastes (LOW) in compliance with the Duty of Care for Waste.
- Any movement of PCBs has a hazardous waste consignment note that accompanies it (Special Waste Consignment Note for Scotland).
- All compliant waste documents and records are maintained so that they can be provided to the relevant regulator when requested.

Note 1: European Waste Catalogue and Codes can be found online and must be used when transferring wastes.

Note 2: If there is any uncertainty about the disposal of PCB's, contact your local environment and sustainability team.

Discussion points

- Discuss with your teams and check that responsible managers for managing PCBs are known.
- Who within your teams is responsible so your records of PCBs are maintained effectively?
- Do you know how PCBs should be handled and disposed of safely? If not, ensure that you have read and understood clause 11 of [NR/L2/ENV/123](#) [Prevention of Pollution to Land and Water](#)

Want to find out more?

[Polychlorinated biphenyls \(PCBs\): registration, disposal, labelling - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

If you have any queries, please contact the [Environment and Sustainability team](#).