

PCB's

WHAT ARE PCBs?

PCBs belong to a broad family organic chemicals known as chlorinated hydrocarbons. These are produced by the combination of one or more chlorine atoms and a biphenyl molecule. PCBs range in consistency from heavy oil liquids to waxy solids. Prior to 1979, PCBs were widely used in electrical equipment such as transformers, capacitors, switches and voltage regulators for their "cooling" properties because they do not readily burn or conduct electricity, and only boil at high temperatures. Also, PCBs do not readily react with other chemicals. They were also used in mining equipment, heat transfer and hydraulic systems, carbonless copy paper, pigments and microscopy mounting media.



DOES YOUR FLUORESCENT LIGHT BALLAST CONTAIN PCBs?

Before EPA banned the manufacturing of PCBs in 1978, PCBs were used in the manufacturing of fluorescent light ballast's. The use of PCBs in ballast's manufactured prior to 1978 is not regulated by EPA. All light ballast's manufactured since 1978 which do not contain PCBs should be marked with

the statement "No PCBs." For those ballast's manufactures prior to 1978, or for those ballast's which contain no statement regarding PCB content, you should assume that they do contain PCBs.

If the ballast does contain PCBs, they are located inside the small capacitor. These would be approximately 1 to 1 1/2 ounces of PCB fluid in the capacitor itself. If the ballast fails, the capacitor may break open, allowing the PCB oil to drip out of the fixture. The capacitor does not always leak when the ballast fails, but when it does happen, measures should be taken to limit or avoid personal exposure.

WHY ARE PCBs HARMFUL TO OUR HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT?

PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) belong to a broad family of organic chemicals known as chlorinated hydrocarbons. PCBs are produced by the combination of one or more chlorine atoms and biphenyl molecules. Virtually all PCBs in existence today have been synthetically manufactured.

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to waxy solids. Prior to 1979 PCBs were widely used in electrical equipment such as transformers, capacitors, switches, and ballasts.

According to EPA, exposure to PCBs can cause chloracne (a painful disfiguring skin illness), nausea, dizziness, eye irritation and bronchitis. Ingestion of PCBs can cause liver damage and digestion problems.