

# PCBs in Caulk

## What are PCBs

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) are a class of persistent manmade chemicals invented in the 1950s and used widely as electrical insulating fluid and plasticizers. Due to their toxicity and carcinogenicity, the sale and use of PCBs were banned in 1978. In addition, materials containing over 50 parts per million (ppm) PCBs are banned from use and must be removed and disposed of properly.

PCBs were added to some caulking compounds while the use of PCBs was legal. Therefore, buildings constructed or renovated between 1950 and the 1980s may have PCBs in the caulk around windows and in masonry expansion joints. The caulk and expansion joint material in some schools and other public buildings around the nation have tested positive for PCBs.

## Regulations

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently developing new rules that address the issue of PCBs in caulk. Because of the potentially huge expense of removing PCB containing caulk from buildings and the lack of understanding about the risks of exposure to PCBs in caulk, the EPA released guidance including interim procedures for managing PCB containing caulk in place until funds can be procured for removal and replacement. Until the new rules are final, AU Risk Management and Safety (RMS) is recommending using the EPA guidance to prioritize action and communicate risks to building occupants and maintenance staff.

The EPA has placed an emphasis on managing caulk that has begun to degrade or crack and therefore may release PCBs into the air and soil, or can be transferred to people when they have their hands near windows.

## Maintenance and Renovation Projects

If AU personnel are doing maintenance or renovation work around or to windows or masonry joints in buildings built or renovated between the 1950s and 1980s, they use caution to avoid potential exposure to PCBs.

If the caulk contains asbestos or lead, follow the procedures developed for handling those materials even if the caulk contains PCBs. If the caulk does not contain asbestos or lead but does contain PCBs or is assumed to contain PCBs, follow the EPA recommendations for working with PCB contaminated caulk listed below:



- Protect passersby by containing the work area with plastic or other protection or keep passersby out of the work area.
- Cover the floor or ground with heavy plastic sheeting.
- Wear standard gear similar to working on materials containing less than 1% asbestos
- Choose methods that minimize the amount of dust generated.
- Place waste caulk along with contaminated PPE, plastic sheeting, and other disposable equipment in an appropriate container for disposal as hazardous waste.
- Use a HEPA vacuum or wet or damp cloth to clean tools and any surfaces not covered by sheeting.
- Dispose of HEPA filter /cloth as hazardous waste.
- Ensure that there is no visible debris or residue when the job is complete.

## Disposal

Building materials with PCB concentrations greater than 2 ppm have disposal restrictions. Building materials with greater than 50 ppm must be disposed of as hazardous waste. Contact the RMS Environmental Programs Office for advice on disposal.

## For More Information:

For more information, see the EPA guidance for handling PCBS in caulk during renovation at <http://www.epa.gov/pcbsincaulk/>

