**Safequarry Hot Topic - Environment and Sustainability**

**Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) – Action Required to meet 31st December 2025 Deadline**

**You can find more information by visiting the Guidance published by the Environment Agency and last updated in December 2022 –** [**PCBs** **registration, disposal, labelling**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/polychlorinated-biphenyls-pcbs-registration-disposal-labelling)

**Below is an example of one company's briefing on its approach to the review and disposal of equipment containing Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs).**

It provides background information on PCBs, identifies the type of electrical equipment where they are likely to be present and outlines an action plan and internal process to meet the deadline of 31st December 2025 for their disposal.

* The Environmental Protection (Disposal of Polychlorinated Biphenyls and other Dangerous Substances) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000
* The Environmental Protection (Disposal of Polychlorinated Biphenyls and other Dangerous Substances) (Scotland) Regulations 2000

**What’s Are PCBs?**

PCBs are a man-made organic compound classed as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) production is now banned; however they still remain a problem because of their previously widespread use and can pose a risk to Human Health and the Environment.

**Where can I find PCBs?**

PCBs are a family of substances which are good electrical insulators. They are chemically stable, fire resistant and don't easily generate a vapour. You may find them in mixtures referred to as “askarels” (a synthetic electrically insulating liquid that is non-flammable) or under a trade name.

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

We can assume that any capacitor or transformer manufactured before 1976 may contain PCBs unless you have information to the contrary. It is also possible that there may be PCBs present in capacitors and transformers manufactured between 1976-1986. Even if the PCBs have been replaced by another liquid, significant amounts of PCBs may still be present. PCBs may occur as contaminants in the oil used in oil-filled electrical equipment.

**Contaminated Equipment (CE):**

•Any equipment that contains more than 5 litres of fluid with a PCB concentration of more than0.005% by weight is classed as CE.

•You must generally assume the following equipment is CE if it was manufactured before 1987and contains more than 5 litres of fluid:

* Power factor capacitors
* Heat transfer equipment
* Pole-mounted transformers
* Process heating equipment
* Vacuum pumps
* High temperature hydraulic systems
* Electrical resistors
* Brushings and other high voltage equipment
* Fluorescent light ballasts
* Hospital diagnostic equipment

**What do we need to do?**

Check and confirm any equipment which does or may contain PCB’s, update the site hazards records, emergency action plans and associated risk assessments.

Ensure that you have a plan in place to dispose of PCBs; equipment or material that contains them so that this is achieved before the deadline unless covered by an exemption.

NB: Old electrical equipment may also contain asbestos or materials which may contain asbestos fibres

**Remember to check all sites which may also include:**

• Old closed / mothballed sites

• Land which may be leased to third party however Heidelberg Materials own the transformer

• Land which is leased, does the landlord have equipment containing PCB’s ? is there a future risk

If you have any documentation or other evidence which confirms the equipment does not contain PCBs you should keep them safe, for example if you have:

• Carried out tests on the equipment and have laboratory reports that show it does not contain PCBs

• Kept the original manufacturers’ manual which shows that the equipment does not contain PCBs (this only applies to sealed items where the oil cannot be changed)

Provide supporting information of the checks made and reports generated which have confirmed the presence of PCB’s or confirmed no PCB’s are present to nominated contacts in the company.

Once collated the information will used as a company register and will be shared with the relevant regulatory authority (sites which hold PCBs will most likely instigate site visits)

Any equipment be removed / decontaminated the records should be updated circulated accordingly.

**Transformers:**

You can continue to hold a transformer until 31 December 2025 if you can reasonably assume two things about its fluid.

• It contains more than 0.005% but no more than 0.05% by weight of PCBs.

• There is a total volume of more than 0.05dm3 (0.05 litres)

• After 31 December 2025 you can no longer use the transformers if they conatin PCBs. You must decontaminate and dispose of them as soon as possible.

However, you can hold a transformer until the end of its useful life if you reasonably assume (and justify if needed) that its fluids either:

• Contain 0.005% by weight, or less, of PCBs

• Contain a total volume of 0.05dm3 or less of PCBs

• After this you must decontaminate or dispose of any PCBs as soon as possible.