

Iowa DNR/Household Hazardous Materials

Material: PCB-Contaminated Materials

Potential Hazards: PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) are mixtures of up to 209 individual chlorinated compounds, known as congeners. There are no known natural sources of PCBs. PCBs are either oily liquids or solids that are colorless to light yellow. Some PCBs can exist as a vapor in air. PCBs have no known smell or taste. Many commercial PCB mixtures are known in the U.S. by the trade name Aroclor™.

PCBs have been used as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, and other electrical equipment because they don't burn easily and are good insulators. Products made before 1977 that may contain PCBs include old fluorescent lighting, fixtures and electrical devices containing PCB capacitors, and old microscope and hydraulic oils.

The manufacture of PCBs was stopped in the U.S. in 1977 because of evidence that they build up in the environment, cause cancer, and can have serious health effects on the immune, reproductive, nervous, and endocrine systems.

Recycle/Reuse: N/A

Proper Disposal: PCB ballasts must be double-bagged and sealed, regardless of whether they are leaking, and disposed of at your local Regional Collection Center. Take the tube and ballast (not the whole light fixture) to the center, find yours at iowadnr.gov/hhm under the RCC tab.

Green Alternatives: Use transformers or light ballasts stamped "No PCB's" or "PCB- free", which should be all ballasts manufactured in the U.S. after 1977.