Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Summary/Purpose: The Polychlorinated Biphenyls Policy details the minimum requirements and procedures to Identify, Mark, Collect, Store and Dispose of materials containing, or potentially containing, Polychlorinated Biphenyls.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB's) are an oily substance made up of monochlorinated or polychlorinated biphenyl or any mixture that contains one or more of them. This includes equipment, including empty containers, contaminated fluids, and are most commonly found in fluorescent light ballasts which were manufactured years ago.

Because studies showed that these materials may be toxic to humans, fish and birds, the Environmental Protection Agency prohibited the manufacture, importation or reuse of the materials years ago.

Under an energy management project, all of the fluorescent lamp ballasts on the campus were changed in the summer of 2000. Many of the ballasts were suspected of containing PCB's. The ballasts were collected and shipped to a recycling facility. They were dismantled, valuable components and metals were collected, and the PCB suspect components were sent off for Incineration. In all, Health and Safety shipped in excess of 106,000 pounds of capacitors and lamp products for recycling and incineration.

Although every effort was made to remove and replace all fluorescent lamp ballasts (primarily for energy conservation), it is possible that some ballasts were overlooked during this massive renovation project.

The following steps should guide maintenance workers in identifying, removing and securing PCB suspected ballasts for disposal through Health and Safety.

Maintenance personnel who remove ballasts from fixtures are required to examine the ballast for PCB's to determine if they could possibly contain PCB's. If contamination is suspected, workers must place the ballast into a container supplied by Health and Safety, assure that the container is properly labelled, and notify Health and Safety when a container is full.

1. Examine the ballast for PCB's. Regulations require that all ballasts manufactured since PCB's were taken off the market carry a label that states: "No PCB's" somewhere on the label. All ballast carrying the marking "No PCB's" can be placed into any available dumpster, or sent off to a metal recycler. All ballast without this specific marking must be suspected of containing PCB's.

2. When you must remove a PCB suspect ballasts from a fixture, you must wear appropriate protective equipment. Nitrile gloves, eye protection and chemical resistant coveralls may be necessary if contact with internal components is required. When working around sharp objects like sheet metal, wear appropriate outer work gloves in addition to inner Nitrile gloves. Eye protection is especially important when working on systems, which are in
operation. Personnel must never attempt to open a ballast. Any leaking PCB suspect ballast should be placed in a plastic bag or some other appropriate container to prevent contamination caused by the leaking fluids.

3. Place the ballast into the 5-gallon open-head drum supplied by Health and Safety. Keep the lid on the drum except when you are adding or removing material.

4. Health and Safety will provide appropriate PCB Markings on the container. Maintenance personnel must mark the drum "Removed from service on (date)" and mark the day when disposal was requested.

5. Contact Health and Safety at (915) 5433 to have your containers removed after you have marked, filled, and labeled a drum with the date the materials were removed from service.