

PUGET SOUND National Estuary Program

PCBs IN BUILDING MATERIALS

In this project, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) will develop guidance to help property owners and local governments identify and abate polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in building materials. Our deliverables will inform property owners on how to address sources and make sound decisions when demolishing and renovating their properties.

OUR PROJECT PLANS

- Establish guidance to help property owners identify and abate their building materials that contain PCBs. We will do this in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Estimate costs to identify and reduce sources of PCBs as part of demolition and renovation projects.

HOW WE'RE DOING IT

We are working with an interdisciplinary team of state and local government, research, and contracted experts to address this issue and eliminate PCB sources.

WHY IS THIS ISSUE IMPORTANT?

PCBs are classified as persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic (PBT). They are considered hazardous to human health and the environment. Although their use was banned in 1979, PCB-containing building materials are still widely used in Washington state. EPA's research shows that caulking put in place 1950 – 1979 may contain as much as 40 percent PCBs. We estimate that King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties contain about 60,000 commercial or industrial buildings built in this time period.



Figure 1: Exterior caulking—a common source of PCBs—used on masonry concrete as a sealant. Photo credit: Steve Snodgrass on Flickr.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

EPA's Toxic Substance Control Act does not require property owners to test for PCBs in building materials before demolition or renovation. State and local governments can establish a PCB-sampling policy to make sure owners investigate PCB sources in building materials during specific activities, such as demolition and renovation or as due diligence for property transactions.

ABOUT ECOLOGY

Our mission is to protect, preserve, and enhance the environment for current and future generations. We are managing this project under the Hazardous Waste and Toxic Reduction program, which works to eliminate toxic chemicals at their source. The PCBs in Building Materials team of 14 is focused on this issue.

MORE INFORMATION

Myles Perkins
Department of Ecology
425-457-2514
myles.perkins@ecy.wa.gov

