Draft PCB Chemical Action Plan

Opportunity to Comment

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) invites you to comment on the Draft Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) Chemical Action Plan (CAP).

We will accept comments by mail, fax, or email August 6 – October 6, 2014. Comments must be received by 5 p.m. October 6, 2014.

Two public meetings to share information and answer questions will take place:

OLYMPIA

Date: September 15, 2014
Time: 10 a.m.
Place: Ecology Headquarters and via internet webinar
300 Desmond Dr., Lacey, WA 98504
Click here to register for the webinar.
or visit www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/pbt/pcb.html

SPOKANE

Date: September 24, 2014
Time: 4 p.m.
Place: Ecology Eastern Regional Office
4601 North Monroe St., Spokane, WA 99205

PCB CAP

Reducing toxic threats is one of Ecology's priorities. Under the Persistent, Bioaccumulative Toxics (PBT) Initiative, Ecology seeks to reduce toxic threats from chemicals such as Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs).

The PCB Chemical Action Plan (CAP) is a plan that identifies, characterizes and evaluates uses and releases of PCBs and recommends actions to protect human health and the environment.

This PCB CAP estimates releases of PCBs from various sources to air, land, and water. It also describes the physical and chemical properties of PCBs and why they are considered toxic to humans and other organisms. The recommendations are a set of actions to reduce and phase out uses, releases, and exposures in Washington, in consideration of current management approaches. An economic analysis on the cost of recommendations is also included.

MORE INFORMATION

Comment period:

August 6 – October 6, 2014

Access Draft PCB CAP online:

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/pbt/pcb.html

Send written comments to:

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Special accommodations:

If you require special accommodations or need this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Waste 2 Resources program at 360-407-6900.

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

Toxic Effects

There are 209 different types of PCBs. PCBs mostly occur as complex mixtures that include many PCB compounds. As a result, Ecology chose to evaluate available information on all PCB compounds as part of the PCB CAP. PCBs are persistent in the environment, build up in the food chain, and cause adverse health effects in humans and wildlife.

Several PCB compounds/mixtures are classified as human carcinogens. Other health effects for people and wildlife include harm to immune, nervous, and reproductive systems. PCBs disrupt thyroid hormone levels in animals and humans, hindering growth and development.

Major Sources of Concern

The 1976 *Toxics Substances Control Act* (TSCA) prohibited manufacture, processing, and distribution of PCBs. While TSCA is often referred to as a "ban" on PCBs, the law allowed some historical uses to continue, and set allowable levels of inadvertent production of PCBs in other products.

Current PCB levels in Washington represent both historical uses and ongoing manufacturing processes that create PCBs as byproducts. About 75 percent of PCBs produced before 1979 were used in transformers and capacitors, including small capacitors in lamp ballasts and appliances. While large transformers and capacitors have been mostly removed from use, there are still unknown numbers of small capacitors in use. A large reservoir of past uses of PCBs includes building materials such as old caulk and paint. PCBs are still unintentionally generated by combustion and by different manufacturing processes, such as for some pigments and dyes. Non-point releases, such as from consumer products, are becoming increasingly important to control and reduce overall PCB delivery to humans and the environment. Stormwater is the largest delivery pathway to surface waters for PCBs statewide.

Levels of PCBs in people and the environment are mostly declining, but PCBs are still widespread. Wildlife is exposed to PCBs in their diet, along with PCBs in water, soil, and sediments. PCBs accumulate in fatty tissues, including in animals eaten for food. PCBs in food are the most significant source of exposure for most people, and we are particularly concerned with levels of PCBs in fish we eat. People are also exposed to PCBs in air, water, soil, and house dust.

Priority Recommendations

The recommendations outline a set of first steps in a long-term plan to reduce PCB releases and exposures. These recommendations are based on an extensive review of scientific research on this topic and with the input of an advisory group representing a wide range of interests and expertise. The recommendations focus on prevention, which is the smartest, cheapest, and healthiest approach to reducing PBTs. Actions that result in the biggest reduction in exposure to the most sensitive people and other living things are most important.

The Departments of Ecology and Health will continue their existing programs such as cleanup, stormwater management, and fish advisories. Recommendations for new actions focus on removing PCB-containing building materials in schools, finding environmental hot spots, learning more about what products contain PCBs, and educating residents.