

## Explore to discover which building materials could contain PCBs.

### Identifying PCBs in Building Materials

Here are steps to help property owners identify and inventory building materials suspected to contain PCBs:

**Step 1:** Look for PCBs by age, use, and building structure

**Step 2:** Identify and inventory suspect building materials

**Step 3:** Review knowledge of suspect building materials. Consider analytical testing to confirm the absence or presence of PCBs within building materials.

Before you begin removing PCBs from your building, you must create a sampling plan that fully complies with the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements. We encourage you to discuss your plan with the [EPA Region 10 PCB coordinator](#)<sup>1</sup> before beginning renovation or demolition.

For more information, please review Ecology's [Focus on: Identifying PCBs in Building Materials](#).<sup>2</sup>

### Paints and coatings

PCBs were added to paints for various reasons, including better adhesive properties and corrosion protection from moisture, chemicals, and flames.

- Buildings developed or renovated between 1950 and 1979 are more likely to contain paints and other coatings with PCBs.
- Look at paints, sealants, coatings, varnishes, and lacquers (particularly oil-based paint).

### Joint material

PCBs were a common additive to joint material for durability and elasticity between 1950 and 1979.

Joint material can be found along the seam of exterior concrete joints, such as between concrete sections on a building wall. These joints may contain caulk, grout, expansion joints, putty, silicon, or asphalt. Joint material between sidewalk slabs or paving around a building may also contain PCBs.

### Door/window caulk

PCBs were widely used in caulking and elastic sealant materials between 1950 and 1979. Buildings built or renovated in the 1980s may also contain PCBs because caulk purchased before the manufacturing ban was likely used.

These materials were primarily used in or around windows, doorframes, stairways, and building joints. They were also used to seal columns and other masonry building material such as brick, masonry, and stone joints.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/pcbs/region-10-pcb-program#contacts>

<sup>2</sup> <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2304027.html>

## Galbestos roofing/siding

Galbestos and Robertson Protected Metals are common trade names for a coated metal sheet containing PCBs and asbestos. Galbestos was typically installed on industrial and commercial buildings from the late 1920s to 1979. This material was favored as it was durable and could withstand harsh environments.

Galbestos can be difficult to identify on buildings and looks similar to other metal sheeting.

- Look for metal panels on the building exterior. There will be an asphalt mixture containing asbestos fibers coating the metal.
- As Galbestos ages, the color coat hardens and shrinks. This causes cracks to appear in the finished coat, exposing the asbestos layer.

## Duct sealants

PCBs were a common additive to sealants for their water and chemical resistance, durability, and elasticity. Duct sealants are a compound that fills the cracks and gaps in ductwork, typically used in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment.

## Light Ballasts

The ballast is a rectangular box in a light fixture that regulates the flow of electricity. Older magnetic fluorescent light ballasts may contain up to two ounces of pure liquid PCBs in or around the capacitor.

Read the label on the light ballast to help determine if the ballast contains PCBs:

- If the label states No PCBs, it is safe to assume that PCBs are not present.
- Check the ballast's manufacturing date. If the ballast was manufactured after June 2, 1979, it does not contain PCBs.
- If you can't clearly identify the date of manufacture or a "No PCBs" statement on an old magnetic ballast, then always assume the ballast contains PCBs.