Laws covering PCB disposal

The Toxic Substances Control Act and the federal PCB regulations (40 C.F.R. Part 761) describe the legal requirements that apply to light ballasts. The regulations can be found on EPA's homepage at **www.epa.gov/pcb**.

If you have further questions, you can call EPA's Office in Seattle at **1-800-424-4372** and ask to speak to Bernie Pribish at x5293 or Dan Duncan at x6693.

Remember to protect yourself and others in your building by safely disposing of PCB-containing light ballasts.

For information on energy-saving light programs contact the Energy Star Hotline toll-free at:
**1-888-STAR-YES
(1-888-782-7937)**

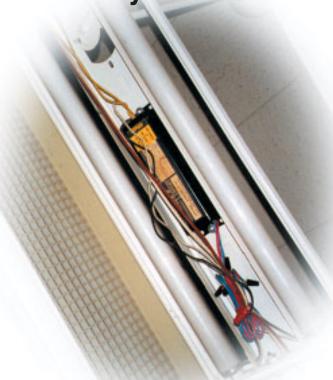or look on the web at:
www.epa.gov/greenlights.html

Handling Light Fixture Ballasts Safely

If you have fluorescent light fixtures made before July 1979, this information applies to you!

Even if you have replaced light ballasts over the last few years to reduce PCB-related risks or for energy conservation projects, it is important to check any ballasts you still have.

Almost all fluorescent light fixtures made before July 1979 have ballasts with capacitors containing small amounts of highly concentrated PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). When these ballasts fail, PCBs can leak out. PCBs can be harmful to kids and adults. So it is a good idea to check your light fixtures during regular maintenance to see what condition the ballasts are in.

Protect yourself and others

PCBs are easily absorbed through your skin and can cause serious health problems if not handled properly. To protect yourself while inspecting fixtures, consider wearing:

❏ rubber gloves
❏ goggles or a face shield to protect your eyes

Check the light ballasts, not the tubes

The ballast is the electrical component for the light fixture. It is usually located within the fixture under a metal cover plate. Sometimes the light fixture has the date of manufacture on it. Sometimes the light fixture is marked "no PCBs."

❏ If the light fixture has no manufacture date and is not marked "no PCBs," you should **assume that the ballast contains PCBs** and check it periodically for leaks. If it is leaking, replace it immediately and dispose of it properly.

❏ If the light fixture has a manufacture date before July 1979, you should **assume that the ballast contains PCBs** and check it periodically for leaks. If it is leaking, replace it immediately and dispose of it properly.

❏ If the light fixture has a manufacture date later than July 1979 or is marked "No PCBs," no inspections are necessary.

Dispose of ballasts properly

Any ballast (unless it from a light fixture that has a manufacture date later than July 1979 or is marked "No PCBs") must be securely packaged in a container approved for PCB disposal. The container must be marked "Contains PCBs" and have an accompanying manifest. The package must be shipped by an authorized PCB transporter or PCB commercial storer. **DO NOT USE ANY OTHER SHIPPING METHOD**. Licensed transporters or storers can be found in the yellow pages under "Environmental Consultants." If you decide to replace many ballasts at the same time, check with EPA to see if additional requirements apply.

Why go to all this trouble?

There are two main reasons for properly disposing of PCB ballasts.

1. When people are exposed to high levels of PCBs, they could get sick. When leaking PCB ballasts are not properly cleaned up, the PCBs can be spread around, increasing the possibility that someone can be exposed to the chemical. PCBs do not break down into safer chemicals; instead they persist in the environment for many years.

2. Failing to follow the law could cost you money. Federal and state laws require PCB-containing material to be handled in very specific ways. Failure to follow these laws can result in federal and state penalties, which can cost you many thousands of dollars.