

How To Determine if a Ballast Contains PCB

Below is a summary taken from GE's and EPA's website.

For information on other ballast manufactures please feel free to call or email us anytime.

1. What are PCBs?

Polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, are a group of industrial chemicals that were widely used before 1979 as insulators in electrical equipment. Use and disposal of PCBs is federally regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Toxic Substances and Control Act (TSCA).

2. How can I tell if a ballast manufactured by GE contains PCBs?

All high-power-factor fluorescent lamp ballasts manufactured by GE Lighting prior to May 1977 include a small metal capacitor (an electronic device used to store an electrical charge) that contains approximately 10 grams of PCB fluid. The capacitors in our fluorescent lamp ballasts manufactured after January 1, 1979, do not contain PCBs. Ballasts manufactured between May 1977 and January 1, 1979, may include either type of capacitor.

To find out if your GE Lighting ballast contains PCBs,

- [Download the Date of Manufacture Codes chart.](#)
- Look for the two-letter date code that's stamped into the mounting feet at one end of the fluorescent ballast
- Find the ballast's two-letter code on the chart to find the month and year of manufacture.

Ballasts manufactured after January 1, 1979, do not contain PCBs. If the ballast was manufactured between May 1977 and January 1, 1979, look additionally for the catalog number on the label attached to the top of the ballast. If the catalog number contains a "W," the ballast does NOT contain PCBs. (Ballasts manufactured after January 1, 1979, have "No PCB" printed on the label.)

EPA Summary of Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB)

PCBs belong to a broad family of man-made organic chemicals known as chlorinated hydrocarbons. PCBs were domestically manufactured from 1929 until their manufacture was banned in 1979. They have a range of toxicity and vary in consistency from thin, light-colored liquids to yellow or black waxy solids. Due to their non-flammability, chemical stability, high boiling point, and electrical insulating properties, PCBs were used in hundreds of industrial and commercial applications including electrical, heat transfer, and hydraulic equipment; as plasticizers in paints, plastics, and rubber products; in pigments, dyes, and carbonless copy paper; and many other industrial applications.

Commercial Use of PCBs

Although no longer commercially produced in the United States, PCBs may be present in products and materials produced before the 1979 PCB ban. Products that may contain PCBs include:

- Transformers and capacitors
- Other electrical equipment including voltage regulators, switches, reclosers, bushings, and electromagnets
- Oil used in motors and hydraulic systems
- Old electrical devices or appliances containing PCB capacitors
- Fluorescent light ballasts
- Cable insulation
- Thermal insulation material including fiberglass, felt, foam, and cork
- Adhesives and tapes
- Oil-based paint
- Caulking
- Plastics
- Carbonless copy paper
- Floor finish

The PCBs used in these products were chemical mixtures made up of a variety of individual chlorinated biphenyl components, known as [congeners](#). Most commercial PCB mixtures are known in the United States by their industrial [trade names](#). The most common trade name is [Aroclor](#).

Release and Exposure of PCBs

Prior to the 1979 ban, PCBs entered the environment during their manufacture and use in the United States. Today PCBs can still be released into the environment from poorly maintained hazardous waste sites that contain PCBs; illegal or improper dumping of PCB wastes; leaks or releases from electrical transformers containing PCBs; and disposal of PCB-containing consumer products into municipal or other landfills not designed to handle hazardous waste. PCBs may also be released into the environment by the burning of some wastes in municipal and industrial incinerators.

Once in the environment, PCBs do not readily break down and therefore may remain for long periods of time cycling between air, water, and soil. PCBs can be carried long distances and have been found in snow and sea water in areas far away from where they were released into the environment. As a consequence, PCBs are found all over the world. In general, the lighter the form of PCB, the further it can be transported from the source of contamination.

PCBs can accumulate in the leaves and above-ground parts of plants and food crops. They are also taken up into the bodies of small organisms and fish. As a result, people who ingest fish may be exposed to PCBs that have bioaccumulated in the fish they are ingesting.