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Managing PCBs in Caulking - Nuisance or Nightmare?

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In recent years, it has been discovered that that caulk containing potentially harmful polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) was used in many buildings, including schools, in the 1950s through the 1970s. In general, schools and buildings built after 1978 do not contain PCBs in caulk. New England Environmental Business Council (EBC) is presenting programs at two locations targeted towards building owners/operators, environmental professionals and attorneys.

PCBs are a class of 209 organic chemicals known as congeners. 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 as plasticizers in paints, plastics, and rubber products such as commercial grade window and masonry caulk. The congeners have a range of toxicity and have been demonstrated to cause cancer, as well as a variety of other adverse health effects on the immune system, reproductive system, nervous system, and endocrine system. PCBs have been measured at concentrations over 700,000 parts per million (ppm) in caulk in public buildings in New England. Although there are no regulations that require testing of building materials that are serving their intended use, PCBs may create health risks by volatilizing into indoor air or leaching into adjacent building materials or soils. On September 25, 2009, EPA announced new guidance for school administrators and building managers with information about managing PCBs in caulk and assessing the health risk of caulk left in place. Once PCB-impacted caulk is disturbed or removed, it must be managed, handled and disposed of as hazardous waste if it is over the EPA limit of 50 ppm.

EBC will present two programs titled Managing PCBs in Caulking in Older Buildings to provide up-to-date information about PCBs in caulk and discuss strategies for managing the testing, removal and disposal of PCB-contaminated materials. To maximize the value of this program, case studies providing insight into actual projects will be presented. The first program will be held May 20, at the Emerging Enterprise Center at Foley Hoag, Bay Colony Corporate Center, 1000 Winter St., Waltham. The second program will be held on May 25, at the Public Service of NH Auditorium located at 780 North Commercial St., Manchester, NH. Further information and registration details can be found at www.EBCNE.org

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