

Case Study:

Managing Potential PCB Exposure

K-12 Public School System
Massachusetts

Situation

A Massachusetts public school system consisting of over twenty buildings – pre-k through high school – was made aware that its schools built or renovated between 1950 and the 1970s could potentially contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). At this time, the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had recently released updates reiterating that the presence of PCBs in building materials has the potential to adversely affect the health and safety of students, teachers, and other employees presiding in classrooms, hallways, and common areas. In addition to this, the presence of PCBs violates the EPA's Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), if above a 50 parts-per-million (ppm). Due to health concerns and potential compliance issues, the school system sought out Triumvirate Environmental to manage the issue.

Action

Triumvirate entered as a consultant to advise the school system on rapid assessment, corrective actions, regulatory requirements, and health and safety concerns. Triumvirate assessed the situation in each building to determine where attention was needed and management required. Following this assessment, a comprehensive plan was developed to manage the building materials likely to contain PCBs. Triumvirate secured EPA support for its risk-based approach, and management activities commenced. Triumvirate conducted all inventory activities after school-hours and on Saturdays, so as not to disturb students and workers. More than thirty leaking, unlabeled, fluorescent ballasts were discovered and removed.

Result

Triumvirate guided the school system through a time of ambiguity, urgency, and sensitivity. Serving as a trusted advisor, Triumvirate communicated the realities of PCB-risk and provided reasonable best-management practices. Then, it implemented a short- and long-term plan for building operation and maintenance that protected the safety of students and staff. In addition to maintaining health and safety, Triumvirate also saved the school remediation costs by quickly assessing more than twenty schools, developing a risk-based management plan, and obtaining EPA support. The school system's quick response to the serious health concern and its compliance with regulatory standards maintained its esteemed reputation with parents, the worker's union, and the EPA.



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