PCBs in Schools

an overview and status update

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What are PCBs

- Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), Human made chemical; almost entirely produced by Monsanto.
- EPA has banned very few chemicals under Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA); PCBs were banned in 1980.
- PCBs are often found in caulk and sealants; light ballasts; paints and finishes; adhesives and insulation; roofing; and electrical components (including HVACs).

Why Schools and Indoor Air

- In 2020 Burlington HS found PCBs in indoor air as a part of a planned reconstruction project. PCBs were found throughout BHS and the school decided to rebuild.
- In 2021, the legislature required all schools test for and address impacts from PCBs in indoor air at schools.
- Studies have shown that schools represent the highest exposure to PCBs for students and staff when concentrations are elevated.

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How Schools were selected

- 328 schools were identified as being built or renovated prior to 1980.
- DEC and Health prioritized schools based on:
  - The age of the building;
  - The number of free or reduced lunches;
  - Childcare in the school;
  - Prior PCB work and
  - Planned construction / HVAC work.
- Schools could ask to move around the list for district specific reasons.

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How the program works

- Schools inventory and group like rooms (similarity of building materials, age of construction);
- Schools test a representative sample (30%) of grouped rooms;
- Health develops an occupancy letter for how to address exceedances; site specific work has been done to accommodate school specific issues;
- DEC works with the school consultants to conduct a comprehensive source investigation; use that data to develop an alternatives analysis; there is a plan to implement for the selected remedy.

Current testing status (March 2026)

Schools requiring testing	Schools where inventories have been approved by SMS to conduct	Schools where Indoor Air testing has been approved by SMS to implement (% complete)	Schools with at least one sample that exceeded the SAL (% exceeded)	Schools with at least one sample that exceeded the IAL (% exceeded)	Schools with all results below the SAL
328	183 (56%)	157 (48%)	47 (32%)	21 (14%)	102 (68%)

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Where we are at today – current cleanup status

Name of School	Amount Pending (Encumbered)	Work to be completed
Bellows Falls Union High School	$2,144,610	Final remediation plan pending to remove fireproofing. Most recent testing below standard.
Green Mountain Union High School (Chester)	$84,248 (note: planned to encumber remaining funds for cleanup work).	Alternatives analysis and cleanup plan underway. GMUHS has also requested CDS to fund other construction projects concurrent with cleanup.
Hartford High School	$419,813	Alternatives analysis and cleanup plan underway.
North Country Union High School (Newport)	$1,104,393	Multiple work activities to mitigate PCB impacts in the school. Alternatives analysis underway.
Soar Learning Center (St. Albans	$207,537	Alternatives analysis and cleanup plan underway.
Twin Valley Elementary (Wilmington)	$1,579,997	Significant reductions have taken place at the school due to work performed to date. Alternatives analysis and remediation plan pending for additional work.

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Position on H. 542

- Generally opposed to the approach taken in H. 542.
- Numerous schools have conducted testing in accordance with our standards using local money, anticipating reimbursement when more funding is available. H.542 does not allow us to reimburse those schools.
- There is an equity issue with 50% of the schools knowing that they do or do not have an issue with PCBs and 50% not knowing.
- There is an equity issue with 50% of the schools being funded by the State and the other half either not identifying a serious issue or being forced to use local funds to identify and address PCB related issues.

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What to do going forward

- Require PCB testing for indoor air when doing facility master plans for school construction.
- Mitigate impacts between the time testing occurs and when planned renovations or construction takes place at the school.
- Coordinate PCB abatement money with school construction funding. Costs and disruption will be significantly lower when abatement is paired with construction.
- Find funding assistance for those schools that want to test sooner.

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