



FACT SHEET

DRAFT MULTIMEDIA STRATEGY FOR PRIORITY PERSISTENT, BIOACCUMULATIVE, AND TOXIC (PBT) POLLUTANTS

THE PROBLEM

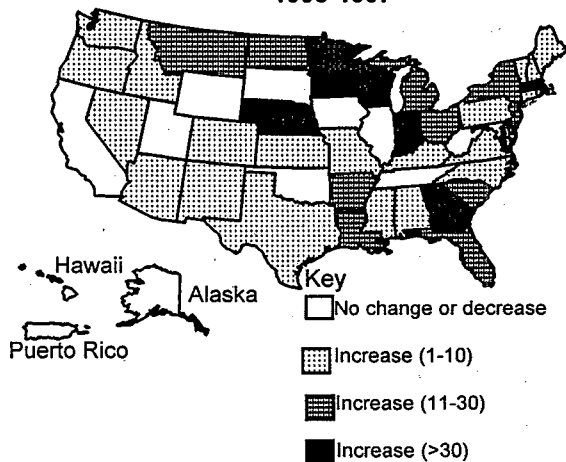
Persistent, bioaccumulative toxic pollutants (PBTs) are highly toxic, long-lasting substances that can build up in the food chain to levels that are harmful to human and ecosystem health. They are associated with a range of adverse human health effects, including effects on the nervous system, reproductive and developmental problems, cancer, and genetic impacts. EPA's challenge in reducing risks from PBTs stems from the pollutants' ability to travel long distances, to transfer rather easily among air, water, and land, and to linger for generations in people and the environment.

EPA is committed to protecting children and women of child-bearing years from exposure to PBTs, and reducing the concentration of PBTs in our Nation's waterways.

BETTER MONITORING OF PBTs IMPROVES THE PUBLIC'S "RIGHT-TO-KNOW"

The total number of fish consumption advisories (i.e. consumption restrictions) in the United States increased by 80 percent from 1,278 in 1993 to 2,299 in 1997.

Change in Number of Fish Consumption Advisories from 1993-1997



In addition, the following states have issued statewide advisories for certain types of waters due to PBTs: ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT, NJ, NY, OH, IN, MI, MO, NC, AL, FL, LA, and TX.

The goal of EPA's strategy is to further reduce risks to human health and the environment from existing and future exposure to priority PBT pollutants.

4 MAIN ELEMENTS OF EPA'S STRATEGY:

- Develop and implement national action plans to reduce priority PBT pollutants, utilizing the full range of EPA tools;
- Continue to screen and select more priority PBT pollutants for action;
- Prevent new PBTs from entering the marketplace; and,
- Measure progress of these actions against our Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goals and national commitments.

EPA's First 12 Priority PBT Pollutants From the Canada- U.S. Binational Toxics Strategy

aldrin/dieldrin	mercury & compounds
benzo(a)pyrene	mirex
chlordane	octachlorostyrene
DDT	PCBs
hexachlorobenzene	dioxins & furans
alkyl-lead	toxaphene

WHY IS A STRATEGY NEEDED?

To date, EPA actions to reduce emissions of PBTs have been largely separate regulatory activities aimed at different environmental media (air, water, or land). Such actions will now be better coordinated to assure, for example, that regulations removing the pollutant from air do not inadvertently result in transferring the pollution to the land or water. Developing an Agency-wide strategy enables EPA to harness all of its tools -- voluntary, regulatory, international, enforcement, compliance, and research -- and direct them at a set of priority pollutants of common concern to all EPA program offices.

HOW WILL EPA MAKE THIS STRATEGY WORK?

EPA's strategy outlines a number of actions the Agency will take to reduce exposures to and uses of PBTs. Some of the near-term actions include:

Preventing the introduction of new PBTs into commerce that may pose an unreasonable risk to human health and the environment, and to require testing to confirm a chemical's PBT status. (Refer to TSCA New Chemicals *Federal Register* Notice dated 10/5/98)

Encouraging voluntary reductions of priority PBTs in hazardous waste. EPA's Office of Solid Waste has challenged industry to voluntarily target priority PBTs found in hazardous waste for waste minimization activities. (EPA has proposed a list of 53 PBTs for this purpose in the draft RCRA PBT List in the *Federal Register* Notice dated 11/9/98.)

Giving the public information on mercury emissions from utilities. EPA will require utilities to conduct coal and emissions sampling for mercury in order to analyze the link between mercury emissions and sources.

Increasing the public's right-to-know about local sources of PBT emissions. EPA's Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) program will issue a proposed rule in late 1998 that will add certain PBTs to the Toxics Release Inventory and lower reporting thresholds for PBTs already on TRI so that the public will have the right to know about these pollutants.

Evaluating fish in U.S. water bodies for PBT contamination. EPA's Office of Water will conduct a comprehensive study of PBT contamination in fish tissue as an indication of PBT contamination in our nation's water bodies.

WHY ARE PARTNERSHIPS SO IMPORTANT?

EPA cannot do this alone and will rely on close cooperation with its regulatory partners to carry out these shared priorities. EPA will need their input to ensure that local and regional PBT problems are adequately addressed. Additionally, EPA will be engaging in partnerships with industry, environmental groups, and the public and will strive to fully involve stakeholders. Long-term success will be based on cooperative efforts that are mutually beneficial. The following partnerships exemplify the spirit of EPA's Strategy:

✓ The American Hospitals Association (AHA), Healthcare Without Harm (HWH), and the EPA reached a landmark agreement with the goal of virtually eliminating mercury-containing waste from hospital waste streams by the year 2005.

✓ Three Indiana steel facilities -- Bethlehem Steel Burns Harbor, Ispat Inland Inc. Indiana Harbor Works, and U.S. Steel Gary Works -- signed an agreement to reduce the use of mercury at their facilities through pollution prevention.

✓ The Chlor-alkali sector of the chemical industry has committed to reduce mercury use by 50 percent by 2005.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

For copies of EPA's Draft PBT Strategy and other related documents, call the *Pollution Prevention Information Clearinghouse* at (202) 260-1023.

Documents are also available on the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.epa.gov/pbt>