

What Are PBDEs?

Have you ever heard of PBDEs (**polybrominated diphenyl ethers**)? They're chemicals that used to be put into things like furniture and electronics to make them less likely to catch fire. But now we know that PBDEs are harmful for our health and the environment... Let's learn more!

Why Are PBDEs a Problem?

PBDEs can make people sick if they are exposed to them for a long time. They can be especially bad for kids because their bodies are still growing. PBDEs can also get into the air, water, and soil, which can harm animals and plants. PBDEs bioaccumulate once in the environment, which means animals can have higher levels of the chemical present as you move up the food chain. PBDEs are also tough to break down and remain in the environment for long periods of time.

What Are We Doing About PBDEs?

Many places are working hard to get rid of PBDEs and find safer alternatives. Here are some things being done:

- Safer Products: Newer products are made without PBDEs.
- Recycling: Old furniture and electronics are recycled or disposed of properly so PBDEs don't end up in the environment.
- Laws and Rules: There are rules now that help make sure manufacturers don't use PBDEs in new products. You can learn more here: <https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-toxic-chemicals/addressing-priority-toxic-chemicals/pbde>
- Wastewater Treatment: The City's Riverside Park Water Reclamation Facility (RPWRF) utilizes state-of-the-art tertiary membranes to treat a number of pollutants. Over 99% PBDEs entering RPWRF are removed by the facility, based on recent testing.

How Can You Help and Protect Yourself?

- PBDEs collect in house dust. Reduce your exposure to indoor dust by cleaning regularly and use a vacuum with a HEPA filter. Open windows and doors while you clean and wash hands after cleaning your house.
- Recycle Older Materials: Make sure to recycle old electronics and furniture properly. Check the [Spokane Waste Directory](#) to learn how and where to dispose of them.
- Choose Safe Products: When buying new things, check to see if they're free from harmful flame retardants like PBDEs.

- Be aware of [fish consumption advisories](#) on the Spokane River. Eating lean cuts of meat and low-fat dairy products also may help reduce your exposure to the low levels of PBDEs that can be found in animal fats.