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Persistent Organic Pollutants

Working towards a POPs Free Environment for our Future Generations!

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What are POPs?

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) are a group of toxic chemicals sharing 4 common properties:

- Highly toxic
- Persistent in the environment
- Travelling long distance globally
- Bioaccumulating in people and the wildlife

They are widely used as pesticides and/or industrial chemicals.

Potential Harmful Effects of POPs

- Cause cancer
- Reduce reproductive success
- Disrupt the immune system
- Damage the central nervous system
- Induce birth defects

The Stockholm Convention

The Stockholm Convention on POPs is an international treaty to protect human health and the environment from potential harmful effects of POPs. Parties to the Convention need to take measures to reduce and ultimately eliminate an initial set of 12 POPs, the "Dirty Dozen".

The Dirty Dozen

Pesticides	Industrial Chemicals	Unintentionally Produced by Products
• Aldrin • Chlordane • DDT • Dieldrin • Endrin • HCB • Heptachlor • Mirex • Toxaphene	• Hexachlorobenzene (HCB) • Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)	• Dioxins • Furans • HCBs • PCBs

Sources of POPs

- Pesticides and industrial chemicals are intentionally produced for specific anthropogenic purposes
- Dioxins/furans are produced unintentionally as by-products of:
 - Thermal processes with incomplete combustion
 - Industrial processes involving chlorine
 - Natural processes (e.g. forest fires and volcanic eruptions)

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Are the 12 POPs being produced and/or used in Hong Kong?

The 9 POPs pesticides under the Convention are not registered or their registration status has been cancelled for many years. None of them is now being produced or used in Hong Kong.

PCBs are no longer used as an industrial chemical in Hong Kong. Only a small number of PCB-containing equipment (mostly small capacitors) are still in use.

Dioxins/furans are unintentionally produced POPs, commonly found in practically all media and in food. Comparatively higher levels of dioxin/furan contamination have been recorded in contaminated soils, sediments and biota whilst very low levels are found in ambient air and water.

What is Hong Kong doing under the Stockholm Convention?

- The Stockholm Convention became effective to the People's Republic of China (PRC) including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) on November 11, 2004.
- The PRC needs to prepare a National Implementation Plan (NIP) in accordance with the requirements of the Stockholm Convention.
- The NIP includes the HKSAR Implementation Plan (HKSARIP).

Key Components of the HKSARIP

- An overview of the current POPs situation in Hong Kong
- Strategies, priorities and action plans to control POPs in the next 5 - 10 years
- Promotion of public awareness
- Enhancement of regional information exchange and collaboration

Stop POPs, Action Now!

- Avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle waste
- Prevent forest fires
- Stop uncontrolled open burning
- Phase out and replace PCB-containing equipment
- Adopt best available techniques (BAT) and best environmental practices (BEP) in industrial processes
- Prevent illegal use of POPs pesticides

More about POPs

Please visit our dedicated thematic website under <http://www.epd.gov.hk> to find out more about POPs.