

File note

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Location and removal of PCB-containing items from Patea freezing works site

As part of preparing an application for subsidy funding from the Ministry for the Environment towards an assessment of the site of the former Patea freezing works for potential contamination, Gary Bedford (Director-Environment Quality) and Shane Reynolds (Scientific Officer) visited the site on 30 May 2007 together with Graeme Proffitt of PDP. During this inspection it was observed that the electrical switchboard noted appeared to have been stripped of fittings. It was therefore provisionally assumed that PCB equipment had been removed. The design of the assessment subsequently submitted and approved included provision for determining whether there was contamination by PCBs.

On Wednesday 6 February there was a major fire at the site.

On the following Monday evening Gary Bedford attended a public meeting at Patea. During the meeting the question of PCB equipment within the buildings was raised. A member of the public presented two items of electrical equipment to the meeting and stated that 'there were hundreds of these in there'. Following the conclusion of the meeting, Gary approached the person and obtained his name and contact details - Dennis Newell, 06 273 8689.

On Wednesday 13 February, Mike Nager (Investigating Officer) and Callum MacKenzie (Scientific Officer- Hazardous substances) inspected the site (having regard to their personal safety), to ascertain whether PCB equipment could be sighted within the buildings and if so, their state, accessibility, and potential ease of removal.

Callum subsequently contacted Mr Newell on Friday 15 February. Mr Newell indicated that the PCB equipment he was aware of was all located in the vicinity of the boiler house and engine room. These items had been identified during the visit two days earlier. Thus, as far as could be ascertained, all PCBs had been located.

Contractual arrangements were made with Transpacific Technical Services for the removal of all PCB items that the Council would recover from the site (20 February 2008). David de Jager of TDHB was contacted by Gary on 18 February to advise of the Council's intention to recover all PCBs where ease of removal allowed this. David confirmed by return phone call on the morning of Tuesday 19 February that this was acceptable subject to their storage at the Council being kept to a minimum.

On Tuesday 19 February Mike, Callum, Shane Reynolds (Scientific Officer-industry) and Andrew Cotter (Hydrology officer) visited the site to recover as many PCB items as practicable. Mike and Andrew wore hooded chemical splash suits, hard hats, gumboots, long rubberised gloves and used self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). They handled

the majority of the PCB equipment and further investigated the presence of chemical drums and PCB equipment in the enclosed spaces of the boning floor, slaughterhouse and pelts sections. Shane and Callum wore hooded disposable overalls, hard hats, gumboots, gloves and P2 dust masks while collecting PCB equipment from open areas of the plant not damaged in the fire.

All of the recovered PCB equipment was loaded into a single steel recovery drum supplied by Dow AgroSciences Ltd and brought back to the TRC in Stratford pending collection for disposal. The work was completed by 2pm.

A total of 34 large PCB capacitors and one fluorescent light fitting were removed from the site (see attached diagram). Of these, nine capacitors were leaking and two were severely compromised. Some PCB equipment could not be safely removed for disposal, including numerous small wall-mounted transformers present in the majority of the buildings, fire damaged equipment and anything present in areas that were too dangerous to enter.

R&S McGregor Ltd were contracted by Transpacific to collect the PCB wastes removed from the site by the Council. Ray and Scott McGregor arrived at TRC on Tuesday 26 February. The capacitors were repackaged in two plastic lined steel drums. A total of 294 kg of materials was collected for disposal including the contaminated recovery drum (photo attached).

On Wednesday 20 February the buildings were inspected with Peter Gallagher from NZFS to assess the condition of the chemical drums found within the buildings. This inspection was carried out wearing chemical splash suits and breathing apparatus. It was decided during the inspection that it was not feasible to remove a drum of nitric acid due to the corroded state of the drum.

On Tuesday 26 February the NZFS removed three drums containing small amount of oil and two drums containing sodium nitrate. The sodium nitrate drums were moved outside the building and were filled with water to dissolve the chemical. These were positioned so no residue would enter the Patea River.

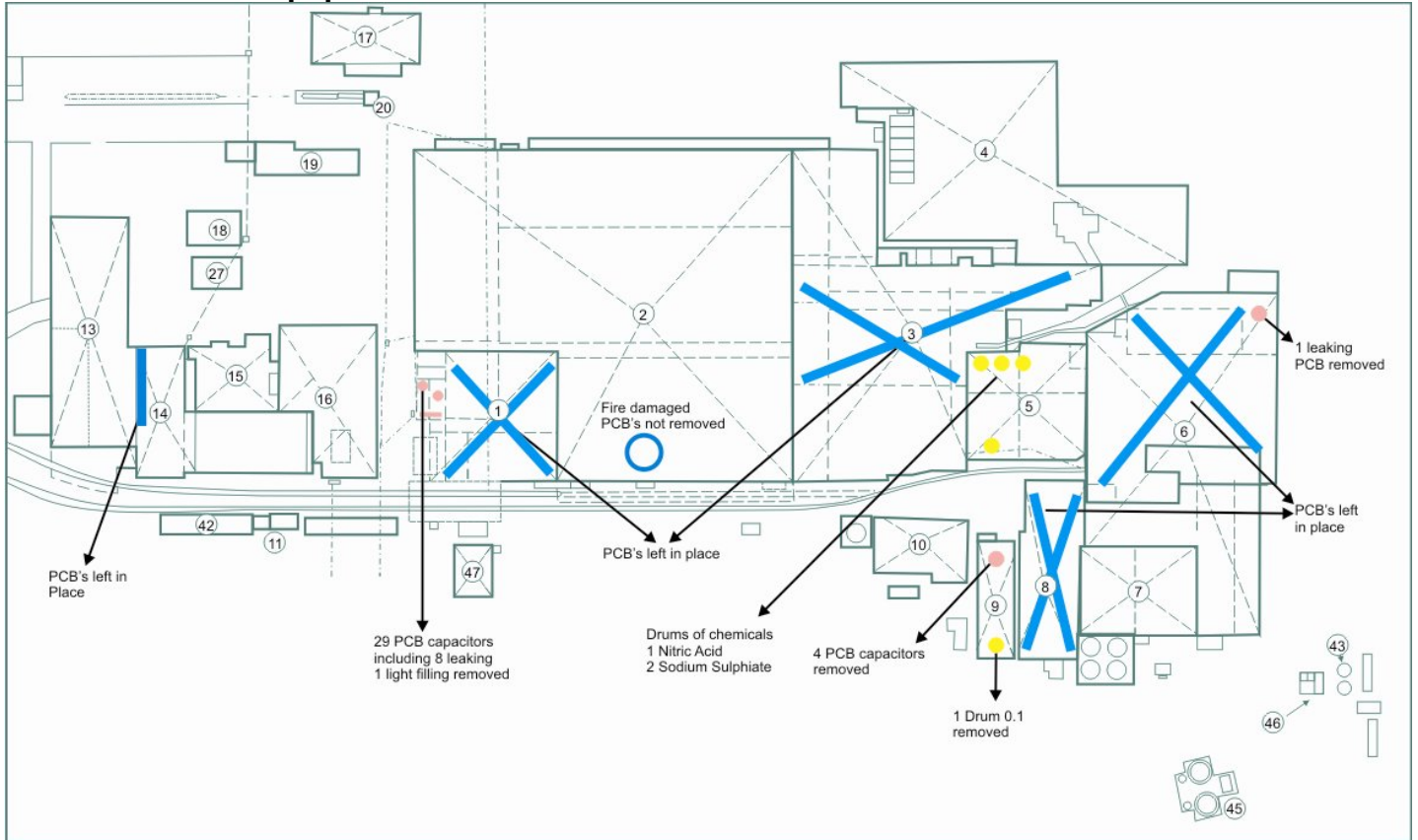
Because of the corroded state of the nitric acid drum, holes were punctured in the side of the drum to let the acid flow onto the concrete floor. This also allowed the acid to neutralise while reacting with the concrete. The acid was then diluted with approximately 2000 litres of water. This was contained inside the building and no environmental effects were noted.

Gary Bedford
Director-Environment Quality

Document activity tags relating to Patea Freezing Works:

IN/18633	Fire, clean-up, polymer application including photographs
ES/PATEAWORKS	Site investigation
R2/3337-0	Investigation photographs, RSLU information

Location of PCB equipment



PCB wastes repackaged for disposal

