

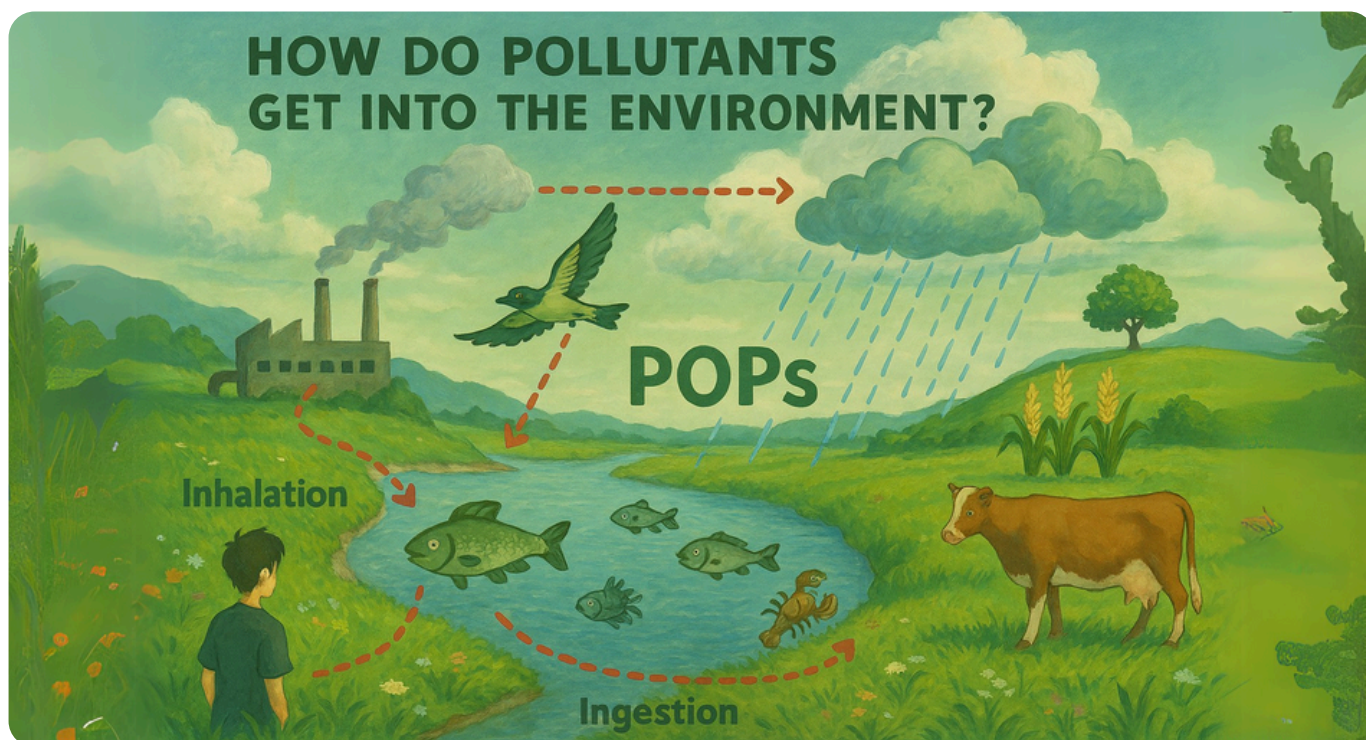
CUSTOMER GUIDANCE **POPs IN WEEE & FURNITURE**

What are POPs?

Persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are a group of hazardous chemical pollutants that are resistant to natural breakdown, remaining intact in natural environments for exceptionally long periods of time.

Although many of these chemicals once proved beneficial in crop production, pest/disease control and in industry, these same chemicals have had significant negative effects on human health and the environment.

There has long been global concern about POPs and the law requires that POPs in waste are destroyed to prevent lasting environmental harm and impacts on the food chain. This means that waste containing POPs must be incinerated and must not be re-used, recycled or landfilled.



POPs were widely used in the flame-retardants used in components of electrical items such as circuit boards, plastic casings and cables etc and their use has been banned since 2009.

Despite this ban, research carried out in 2019 by the ICER, Defra and the EA, found multiple Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) items contained levels of POPs that were above the permitted levels, as well as the presence of other hazardous, flame-retardant chemicals.

This may be partly due to the lifespan of electrical items, with some products having been manufactured prior to 2007/8, and partly because recycled plastic containing POPs was used in their manufacture.



Environment agency guidance

EA guidance on the disposal of WEEE states that WEEE containing POPs cannot be reused or recycled and items have to undergo specialist destruction such as high temperature incineration or chemical destruction, at an authorised site, in order to completely destroy the POPs. This includes most classes of household WEEE, in particular Small Mixed WEEE, CRT Monitors and Flat Screen TVs.

WEEE devices are broadly classified as follows:

Non-hazardous and non-POPs waste	Large domestic appliances eg white goods (washing machines, tumble driers, dishwashers and cookers)	Non-hazardous and non-POPs waste
Hazardous waste, but non-POPs waste	Fridges, freezers and air-conditioning units	Hazardous waste, but non-POPs waste
Hazardous waste and POPs waste	Small mixed WEEE – keyboards, cables, mice etc Display devices – CRT monitors, flat screen TVs, LCD & plasma screens Other household type devices from household or business sources - small domestic appliances, IT & telecommunication equipment, lighting, electronic tools and toys, leisure and sporting equipment	Hazardous waste and POPs waste
May be hazardous and POPs waste (until the chemistry of their printed circuit boards, plastics and cables is determined and assessed)	All other devices	May be hazardous and POPs waste (until the chemistry of their printed circuit boards, plastics and cables is determined and assessed)

Used EEE or WEEE?

The Environment Agency guidance on WEEE and POPs also states that electrical devices containing POPs can be re-used provided that they are not, and were never previously, waste.

At Recorra, we have many years' experience collecting used electrical and electronic equipment from our customers. In accordance with the waste hierarchy, we always prioritise reuse and repair of electronics, or refurbishment, over recycling and recovery. Disposal of used EEE as waste (WEEE) is very much a last resort.

We know that many of the used electrical items we collect can be successfully reused and so we don't consider electronics to be waste, until they have been checked and assessed by our ITAD (IT Asset Disposal) Team.

What happens to used EEE?

All used EEE received at our sorting facility is carefully assessed by our ITAD (IT Asset Disposal) Team to determine if it is suitable for repair or refurbishment. We are generally able to refurbish approximately 70% of monitors and 80% of laptops that we collect. By providing this service, not only do we help our customers to reduce waste, but we have also helped to prevent the need for the continued mining of the raw materials that are essential to the manufacture of new EEE.

After assessment, any used EEE that our ITAD Team cannot repair or refurbish, is then classified as WEEE, at which point the material is sent to an Approved Authorised Treatment Facility.

We send our WEEE to SWEEEP Kuusakoski, a dedicated WEEE processing facility in Kent. There the WEEE is broken down into their components and separated to be sent on for the recovery of raw materials and recycling of the rest. In line with EA guidance, any remaining plastic or items with POPs content is sent by SWEEEP Kuusakoski to approved destruction facilities within the UK.

In 2022, the Environment Agency confirmed the widespread presence of very large quantities of POPs and other hazardous chemicals in both the textiles and foam of upholstered domestic seating e.g. sofas and chairs.

As the law requires that POPs in waste are completely destroyed, this means that waste upholstered furniture containing POPs must be incinerated and must not be re-used, recycled or landfilled.

Recorra regularly collects items of upholstered furniture such as office chairs and sofas, usually as part of a clearance collection. We take the same approach as we do with used EEE and in accordance with the waste hierarchy, we always prioritise reuse, over recycling and recovery and so all items of furniture are collected for assessment and potential reuse.



What happens to upholstered furniture?

- Items in GOOD condition can be reused/sold (80% of office chairs that we collect are reused)
- Items in POOR condition are disassembled for parts, if this is practical, and any wood/metal/plastic is recycled.
- Upholstered/fabric items are not recyclable and will be sent for incineration to destroy any potential POPs, in line with EA guidance.

Upholstered items which we have assessed as not suitable for reuse, typically sofas and large upholstered items, currently go to our recycling partner. Due to this high disposal cost of items including POPs, we have unfortunately had to increase the price of collecting these items from our customers.

Links to relevant government guidance documents

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