

Frequently asked questions

What are POPs?

POPs, or persistent organic pollutants, are approximately 30 chemicals which until 2019 contributed to the fire retardancy of upholstered domestic seating. Research has discovered that these chemicals are harmful to the environment, leaching into the soil and contaminating water courses.

Which items contain POPs?

Upholstered domestic seating manufactured before 2019- sofas, armchairs, cushioned dining chairs, cushioned office chairs, footstools, pouffes, futons, sofa beds, bean bags and floor cushions.

What is the new POPs legislation?

Legislation from the Environment Agency demands that from 1 January 2023 upholstered domestic seating which enters the waste stream must be disposed of by shredding and incineration. This irreversibly degrades the POPs chemicals.

Are POPs containing items dangerous?

No, upholstered domestic seating containing POPs pose a very minimal risk whilst in their entire state within the home and are not dangerous. There is no need to dispose of them. We would however recommend that any damaged upholstery is repaired.

Do all fabric items contain POPs?

No, not all large fabric items contain POPs chemicals. This currently includes mattresses, divans, deckchairs, curtains, scatter cushions, wheelchairs and blinds.

If items made after 2019 don't contain POPs, do they have to be treated the same way?

Yes, legislation demands that all upholstered domestic seating must be disposed of as POPs contaminated waste, even those made after 2019. Though it is likely that upholstered domestic seating made after 2019 does not contain POPs chemicals, this cannot be guaranteed. These items are also often very difficult to age.

How were POPs items previously disposed of before the legislation?

These items were previously delivered to a local transfer station, then sent to landfill.

Why do the crew have to bag up damaged POPs containing items?

Legislation demands that POPs containing items must be fully intact/enclosed before they can be delivered to the local waste transfer station. This is to limit the opportunity for POPs chemicals to enter the environment during the disposal process.

Where can I find more information about POPs and the legislation?

Hampshire County Council have provided further FAQs which can be found at www.hants.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/pops or by calling 0300 555 1375.

The legislation was developed by the Environment Agency, who can be contacted by emailing enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk or by calling 03708 506 506.