

The Environment Agency (EA) has provided an update to all local authorities and waste management companies regarding waste items that could contain POPs. Specific guidance has been issued for soft furnishings including sofas, cushions, and some textiles.

Update on soft furnishings waste and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)



What are POPs?

- POPs are organic substances that persist in the environment, accumulate in living organisms, and may cause long-term adverse effects on our health via food-chains and the environment.
- Items containing POPs are **banned from landfill**.
- UK manufacturers of these items stopped using POPs between 2002 and 2011, but imported items had some POPs chemicals as late as 2019.
- POPs regulations have been in place since 2007.
- The EA has clarified that it will be measuring compliance against these regulations. It therefore issued new guidance in December 2022 regarding identifying, classifying, handling and disposing of POPs waste at:

[gov.uk/guidance/identify-and-classify-waste-containing-persistent-organic-pollutants-pops](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/identify-and-classify-waste-containing-persistent-organic-pollutants-pops)



What do waste producers need to do?

- As a waste producer, it is your responsibility to know if the soft furnishings waste you produce may contain POPs.
- If it can be evidenced by MSDS or import documentation that the soft furnishings waste does not contain POPs, then they can be treated as such.
- If it is not known explicitly if the soft furnishings do not contain POPs, then it must be assumed that they do.
- There is not a specific European Waste Catalogue (EWC) code for POPs - the EWC used for the waste generated should continue to be the one you consider most fitting to its classification.
- **It must be clear on the transfer note** if waste potentially contains POPs.
- POPs containing waste **must not be co-mingled with any other waste streams**, they must not be broken down and need to be stored and handled separately.