Monsanto Company Program for Controlling the Entry of Polychlorinated Biphenyls into the Environment

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Following the announcement by Swedish investigators that substances found in environmental samples were identified as polychlorinated biphenyls, Monsanto began intensive programs to develop accurate analytical methodology and to establish the toxicological effects with test animals.

Long before all the data became available Monsanto announced that in 1970 sales of polychlorinated biphenyls to applications which permitted easy entry into the environment would be discontinued. By mid-1971 sales were made only to heat transfer and electrical equipment, applications which were considered "closed systems" and in which fire-resistance offered by polychlorinated biphenyls was considered critical.

In late 1971, Monsanto further announced that sales to heat transfer applications would also be discontinued. Thus, starting in 1972, sales of polychlorinated biphenyls were and continue to be made only to manufacturers of sealed electrical equipment such as capacitors and transformers, applications for which no acceptable alternative fluids were available. In addition, the types of commercial mixtures sold are those which contained the lowest concentration of the more persistent polychlorinated biphenyls consistent with the fire resistance requirements of the applications. Approval by Monsanto of a customer is very carefully considered to establish actual use in sealed electrical applications.

In 1971, following Monsanto suggestions that a government agency be available as a spokesman for regulatory matters relating to polychlorinated biphenyls, the Interdepartmental Task Force for PCBs was formed. In its report, published in May, 1972 the Task Force supported Monsanto's sales policy and agreed that the continued use in sealed electrical systems was warranted pending the development of acceptable substitute materials.

In February, 1973, the member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published an agreement relating to the use of polychlorinated biphenyls which is less restrictive than the Monsanto policy but does include acceptance of the continued use of these materials in electrical systems.

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The commitment of the manufacturers and users of capacitors and transformers containing polychlorinated biphenyls in the proper use and control of these materials is evident in the formation of an American National Standards Institute committee (ANSI C-107) to develop control guidelines. Guidelines were available in 1973 and final approval obtained in 1974.

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