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GE To Defend Practices

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The General Electric Co. will begin its defense today to state allegations that it polluted the Hudson River with a class of chemicals known as polychlorinated biphenyls.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation contends that water samples taken from the Hudson near GE's plants at Ford Edward and Hudson Falls contained dangerous amounts of PCBs.

DEC has warned against the eating of fish taken from the Hudson River, saying that samples of fish show more PCBs than recommended as safe by the federal Food and Drug Administration.

GE's defense is to begin at 9 a.m. at the DEC headquarters on Wolf Road in nearby Colonie.

The state wants an order to halt all discharges of PCBs into the Hudson River by next September and an order to require GE to participate in removing PCB accumulations from the river.

GE uses a form of PCBs in the making of electrical capacitors, but GE has maintained that it is using a safe form of the chemical and that it has not violated any state water quality law.

Abraham D. Sofaer, a Columbia University law professor, was named by DEC Commissioner Ogden R. Reid to preside at the hearings, which began Oct. 6.

The defense by GE is expected to last three days. Sofaer has said he wants both sides to present all materials to him by the end of the year.

The state action comes amidst reports that the FDA is about to reduce the limit of PCB accumulations from five parts per million to two parts per million.

Fish taken from the Fort Edward-Hudson Falls area have shown several times the current limit.

Federal action to place tighter restrictions on the use of PCBs is pending.

There have been reports that PCBs have been found in some salt water fish which breed in the Hudson River estuary. Reid said recently that PCBs have been found in Lake George fish, possibly the result of seepage of PCBs wastes from landfills.

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