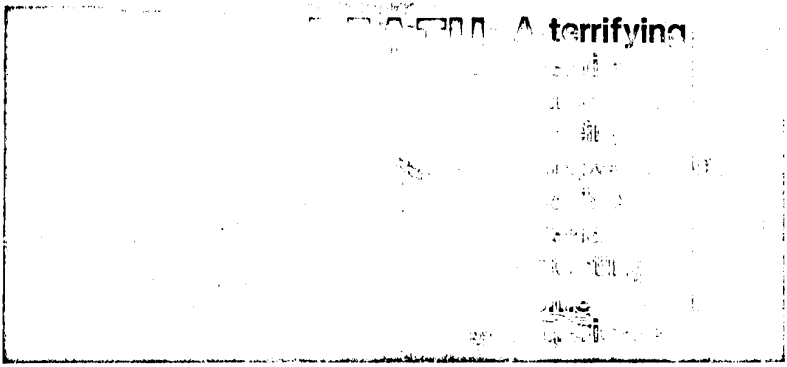
A terrifying



MILLIONS of Americans are threatened by a dangerous industrial chemical which causes brain damage, cancer and deformities in children.

An alarming report by the Environmental Protection Agency has revealed that the chemical, PCB, is present in the bodies of half the U.S. population — about 100 million people.

The chemical is still being dumped into the country's major waterways and is present in nearly every body of water in the U.S., according to the E.P.A.

By ROGER LANGLEY

PCB is a chlorinated hydrocarbon used by industries throughout the world because of its resistance to heat. In the U.S., it is used exclusively in air conditioners and industrial electrical transformers.

Congressman Richard Ottinger (D-N.Y.) told The Star this week: "The EPA estimates that 50 percent of the American population have from 1 to 3 parts per million of PCB in their fatty tissues." A fish containing more than 5 PPM is considered too dangerous to eat by the Food and Drug Administration.

The biggest PCB disaster so far occurred in Yusho, Japan, in 1968, when 1,200 people were stricken after using rice oil contaminated with the chemical.

They were ravished with neurological disorder, bone and joint disorders, the loss of stamina and sex drives. Pregnant women gave birth to a high percentage of stillborn, deformed and undersized infants. Scientists named the condition after their town — Yusho disease.

In the U.S., the biggest PCB risk is New York's Hudson River. The E.P.A. says that two General Electric plants at Hudson Falls and Fort Edward were discharging at least 30 pounds of the chemical into the river every day.

But experts warn that every part of the U.S. is contaminated by PCB.

"It's a national problem," said assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel P. Reed. "I am deeply shocked by the pervasiveness of PCB.

"I am very troubled by the exceedingly high levels found in fish in our drainage system, and I do not mean just the Hudson and the entire Great Lakes system but the Merrimac and Connecticut Rivers of the Atlantic coast, the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers in the Midwest, the Columbia River system in the Northwest, the Sacramento in the West, the Rio Grande and other Gulf coast streams . . . even the Yukon in Alaska."

U.S. experiments with rats have showed that PCB causes liver cancer. In one experiment, eight female monkeys were fed 2.5 PPM of PCB for six months and then mated with normally fed monkeys. Of the eight pregnancies, only three baby monkeys survived and they are all hyperactive.

Dr. Renate D. Kimbrough of the U.S. Public Health Service, told The Star: "Ingestion of PCB in humans must be curtailed."

A spokesman for the EPA, Marlin Fitzwater, said that the federal government already has "elaborate plans for PCB control."

"We have begun to change the water discharge permits for 38 manufacturers who use PCB to stop them from discharging into waterways. We are not going to allow them to dump any."

EPA director Russell Train is meeting with the presidents of the companies involved to discuss the total elimination of PCB use and the finding of possible substitutes.

Train also plans to meet with the presidents of major utility companies and railroads that use transformers containing PCB to discuss waste disposal practices so that they won't be thrown into public landfills where they can break and seep into the water table.

But many environmentalists are worried that a great deal of damage has already been done.

According to E.P.A. records, a transformer leak on a railroad dumped between 10 and 100 pounds of PCB in Pennsylvania in April, 1974. And in July, 1975, a similar accident occurred in Stamford, Conn.

Some 600 gallons of PCB were spilled from a truck in Kingston, Tenn. in March 1973. G.E., which was shipping the chemical, paid $1.7 million to recover it from the saturated earth and put it in 11,500 sealed drums.

On March 17, 1974, an Air Force electrical transformer fell from a pier in Seattle, Washington, and spilled 265 gallons of PCB in the Duwaamish River. It is still being cleaned up at a cost of about $500,000.

PCB is being used to contaminate the earth in other ways. In western New York, several companies have been draining PCB from old transformers and mixing it with crankcase oil and selling the mixture in municipalities to put on roads to keep down dust. There is also a report that PCB was used on an airport runway in Maryland to reduce skidding in wet weather.

Assistant Interior Secretary Reed added: "Frankly, I am thoroughly disgusted by the gnashing of teeth, wailing and rubbing of hands. To the agencies which have the enforcement responsibilities, a word on behalf of the bewildered but concerned American people — get on with it."

Hudson	213 PPM*
Ohio River	133
Merrimac River (Mass.)	98
Yazoo River (Miss.)	73
Allegheny (N.Y.-Pa.)	35
Cape Fear (N.C.)	23
Nanticoke (Md.)	20
Delaware River	19

*PPM — parts per million. Based on tests made on fish from these rivers by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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