DRAFT

Reference Only

Q: How toxic are PCBs?

A: PCBs have a very low level of acute toxicity for humans. In giving guidance to industrial users of PCBs who use the materials at full strength, we warn against ingestion, inhalation or skin contact. PCBs are not readily biodegradable. As such they tend to accumulate in the environment. Studies have shown that PCBs can be injurious to certain forms of bird, aquatic and animal life.

Q: What is the effect on humans who drink water contaminated with PCBs?

A: PCBs have a very low level of solubility in water. Because of the low concentrations of PCBs that would exist in water, the possibility of any acute toxocological problems occurring would be negligible. In terms of any long-term affect, this would depend on a number of factors including the PCB concentration of PCBs in the water, the amount of water consumed and the length of time such water is consumed. You should bare in mind that the principle concern with PCBs involves the possible buildup of these materials through the eco-cycle and food chain.

Q: What is the effect on humans who eat fish or meat containing PCBs?

A: There would be no immediate effect. To emphasize again, PCBs have a very low degree of acute toxicity and are not readily dissolved in water. It is of coarse advisable not to eat fish suspected of being contaminated with PCBs. In the U.S. a safe limit of 2 parts per million in fish tissue has been established.

Q: Does this mean that PCBs can get into local drinking water supplies?

A: Because of the low degree of solubility of PCBs in water the material has probably settled into the bottom of the barge canal. Clay soils tend to absorb the PCBs. Only time will tell if the material will move out of the dead end barge canal. The nature of PCBs is such that it doesn't tend to move too far too fast.

Q: Is the spillage dangerous to health?

A: In a situation such as this probably not. As we explained, due to the low solubility of the PCBs, the amount of material ~~to be~~ actually dissolved in the water ~~would be~~ would be very small.

Ø52577

-ooo-