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GE 'Moving Ahead' on $4-Million Effluent Treatment Plant

By CLIFF LEE
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HUDSON FALLS — General Electric is "moving ahead" with its plans to construct a $4-million effluent treatment plant.

Lucas Hart, general manager of the Hudson Falls and Fort Edward GE plants, said the new system would reduce the plants' discharge of PCBs to less than 100 pounds or 50 pounds per day.

Hart said the company is proceeding with the system on the premise that a compromise can be reached with the state Department of Environmental Conservation on EnCon's demand for zero PCB discharges by September 1976.

He said the system would involve the use of cooling towers to recycle spent effluent, and filtering systems to contain and extract PCBs from this effluent.

Hart said GE is completely committed to this treatment system, and has every intention of constructing it regardless of EnCon's demands.

"We cannot accept the zero discharge demand," he said, "and we don't know how to make the zero."

Hart said the GE plants are currently discharging about 1.3 pounds of PCB per day and that the company is currently working on measures, such as replacement of contaminated pipes and spill prevention systems, to reduce this even more.

The 100-pound level was set by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the maximum discharge allowable. EPA has given GE until April of 1977 to reach this limit.

Hart said the effluent treatment system could be under construction by spring of next year and be in operation by December of 1976.

He added that the 100-pound daily discharge of the two plants, with the treatment system would result in approximately .5 part per million in Hudson River fish, which is "well below" the 5 parts per million standard set by the Federal Drug Administration.

Asked what GE would do if the zero discharge demand is granted, Hart said the company would most likely begin using chemicals other than PCBs in the capacitor production. He added that any chemical substitute would not have the insulation-cable quality of PCBs. He said the company has found substitutes, which have the same electrical qualities of PCBs, and is negotiating with its customers to see if the substitute would be acceptable to them.

Hart said the transition from PCBs to an alternative chemical in production would take at least two years and would mean a temporary shut-down of the plants.