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AIR CONDITIONING AND REFRIGERATION NEWS
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Monsanto states intention to phase out production of PCBs

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — Monsanto Co. here has announced its intention to phase out production of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) dielectric insulating fluids, the nonconductors of direct electrical current necessary in most power generating equipment.

Monsanto manufactures 27 million lb of PCBs per year, which it sells to less than 40 domestic capacitor and transformer manufacturers.

PCBs have been linked to severe human ailments, including chloracne, a skin disease, and liver problems. The fluid is resistant to degradation by natural forces,

and thus presents a major contamination problem.

Its advantages include chemical stability, fire resistance, and electrical insulating properties.

Monsanto does not have a timetable for the phaseout yet, but said it "will be in a planned and orderly manner."

The company also said it will close its PCB manufacturing unit in Sauget, Ill., "as soon as we are satisfied that the electrical power supply industry's needs for usable, acceptable alternate dielectric fluids have been met."

In 1970, Monsanto voluntarily

stopped selling the chemicals to all but those manufacturers of closed electrical systems, for which a viable alternative did not exist. That move reduced its annual PCB production more than 50%.

It has also instituted controls in its manufacturing to minimize environmental impact, and has been working for a number of years on non-PCB products to replace PCB fluids in capacitors and transformers.

The substitutes are currently being evaluated by electrical manufacturers in the U. S.

In related developments:

- Dow Chemical Co. and McGraw-Edison Co. have developed "an environmentally and electrically acceptable capacitor fluid," Dow XFS-4169L, or butylated monochlorodiphenyl oxides, for use in high voltage power capacitors. That product is also being evaluated by the electrical industry.

- The Michigan State House of Representatives passed, by a 101-2 vote, a bill which will eventually halt manufacturers' sales of PCBs for uses that state officials say would lead to water pollution.

These uses include wax casting in the automobile industry, and hydraulic heating systems for apartments, factories, and office buildings. Electrical industry applications are exempt from the bill.