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U.S. To Curb Discharges Of Machinery Coolant

WASHINGTON, May 13 (UPI) — The Environmental Protection Agency, acting on a federal task force report, said Saturday that it would curb industrial discharges of PCBs, a DDT-like chemical used as a machinery coolant. It has caused birth defects in laboratory rats.

The task force, representing eight federal agencies, recommended in a 181-page report that PCBs be "restricted to essential or nonreplaceable uses which involve minimal direct human exposure." However, it advised against an outright ban on the industrially valuable compounds.

The environmental agency said it would curb industrial discharges so that PCB levels in lakes and rivers did not exceed 0.01 parts a billion.

The Food and Drug Administration already has proposed regulations designed to keep PCBs out of food. The rules seek also to prevent food plant machinery leaks like the ones that contaminated poultry feed with PCBs four times in the last 18 months. Because they ate the contaminated feed, 487,000 chickens and turkeys were withheld from the market.

PCBs is an abbreviation for polychlorinated biphenyls, a class of chemicals used for 40 years in electrical machinery and in some plastics, petroleum products and carbonless carbon paper.

In laboratory rats, PCBs caused skin and liver ailments and birth defects. In addition, the task force said, the chemical was linked with "adverse effects on certain forms of animal life" that encountered PCBs in the environment.

Like DDT, which PCBs resemble chemically, the compounds are persistent, meaning they retain their toxicity for years. "PCBs are widely dispersed throughout the environment and . . . can have adverse ecological and toxicological effects," the task force said. It said that there was no evidence that present PCB levels in the environment "constitute a threat to human health."

The task force said Monsanto Co. of St. Louis, the only United States producer of PCBs, already had acted to limit sales of the chemical. But, noting that the Government lacked atuhority to control imported products containing PCBs, urged congressional passage of legislation that would empower the Government to ban or limit imports, production and use of all toxic substances.

The task force included the environment agency, the FDA; the Department of Agriculture, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, and the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Office of Science and Technology.

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