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Monsanto to halt PCB production

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co. will halt production of PCB insulating fluids next year because of the public's fear of adverse effects from the chemical.

Monsanto will withdraw completely from the market no later than Oct. 31, 1977, said Earle H. Harbison Jr., general manager of the firm's specialty chemicals division.

Harbison said Tuesday the target date would have been sooner, but electrical transformer and capacitor manufacturers have said they would be unable to convert to other materials any earlier.

Monsanto is the only manufacturer of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl), a stable, fire-resistant chemical.

The Environmental Protection Agency has found that PCBs build up in the environment and are thought to cause reproductive failures, gastric disorders and skin lesions in mammals.

About 300 million pounds of the virtually indestructible chemical have been dumped into landfills, leaked into water supplies and allowed to sift into production sites, the EPA contends.

EPA Administrator Russell E. Train praised Monsanto's decision, terming it "a significant step in dealing with the total problem of PCB contamination."

But he noted that PCBs already in the environment "will be there for years, moving into life systems, including humans. The problems still need to be addressed vigorously by government and industry."

Monsanto had earlier quit making PCBs for use in carbonless copy paper, fire resistant hydraulic fluids, heat transfer fluid and plasticisers.