

SEP 30 1976

McGraw-Edison switches — PCBs to Edisol

COLUMBIA (AP) — A company that produces high-voltage power capacitors for electric utilities said today it will stop using PCB (insulating fluid Nov. 1), and will convert to a more environmentally safe fluid named Edisol.

Officials of the McGraw-Edison Co. made the announcement at simultaneous news conferences in Columbia and at company headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pa. The company has a South Carolina plant in Greenwood.

R.H. Keith, general manager of the Greenwood plant, said in Columbia that Edisol, developed by the Dow Chemical Co., costs about 25 per cent more than PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), but has a longer life and is less hazardous to the environment. Cost of conversion will be "several hundreds of thousands of dollars," he said. "We are firmly convinced Edisol can do a better job than PCBs."

Some are in use now, he

said.

There have been reports in South Carolina, Georgia and other areas of high levels of PCBs in waterways. There have been warnings from health officials that eating fish taken from Lake Hartwell, located on the South Carolina-Georgia line, may be hazardous to the health of humans.

Keith said PCBs began to be seriously suspected of having undesirable characteristics in 1970, leading to research into safer

fluids.

Some persons who have been exposed to PCBs have developed a skin rash, but more than that, there is some concern they may cause birth defects and cancer, he said.

McGraw-Edison's customers are utility companies such as Duke Power Co., based in Charlotte, N.C., but serving a large portion of upper South Carolina, and South Carolina Electric and Gas Co.

Earlier this month a \$1 billion suit was filed

against the Monsanto Co. of St. Louis, Mo., and the Sangamo Electric Co. of Pickens on behalf of Lake Hartwell property owners in Georgia and South Carolina.

Monsanto was accused in the suit of negligence and "strict liability" in its production of PCBs, according to Ronnie Cole, a member of an Anderson law firm which filed the complaint.

Cole said Monsanto produces PCBs used by Sangamo in its manufacture of

electrical capacitors. Sangamo has been identified as a source of PCBs found in Lake Hartwell.

The suit says the PCB contamination has caused a lowering of property values and a loss in profits to businesses along the lake.

Keith said the initial reaction to Edisol among McGraw-Edison's utility company customers has been good, but there is still wide use of PCBs.

Also, he said, the federal Environmental Pro-

tection Agency seems to like the new insulating fluid. He said the EPA does not have the authority to approve Edisol's production, but could ban its use if it were deemed harmful.

Keith said the EPA regulates the amount of PCBs that may be discharged by electric plants. He said the Greenwood plant has never been accused of discharging harmful amounts of PCBs.

Keith said there are some economic risks invol-

ved in the changeover if customers continue to ask for PCB power capacitors, which also are manufactured by Sangamo, General Electric and Westinghouse.

The motivation for the change "was the recognition in 1970 that this (PCBs) would become an increasing problem—which it has," Keith said.

Rather stringent measures were taken to minimize the discharge of PCBs when the Greenwood plant was built in 1973.