

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER
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Refer inquiries and correspondence to:
Mrs. Mary Jane Baird, Research and Development Center
P. O. Box 43, Schenectady, New York 12301, DIAL COMM 8*235-5068,
quoting this letter's reference number MM-72-60

March 23, 1972

R.W. Roberts
Research & Development Manager
Materials Science and Engineering
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cc: AS Hay
CM Huggins
SW Kantor

Subject: Government Stops use of PCB

On Tuesday, March 21 the Japanese Government (MITI) ordered 23 industrial organizations to discontinue use of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB). The order follows weeks of controversy during which PCB was found in the milk of nursing mothers. The notification by MITI requested the industries to suspend production of electric appliances and parts containing PCB by September 1 of this year. As a result of the ban, manufacturers are expected to switch from PCB to mineral oil. The use of PCB in paints and carbon-paper was prohibited in February, 1972 and December, 1971 respectively. Some firms will be able to continue using PCB for special applications, but the devices must be labeled as containing PCB. The firms who will be manufacturing devices outside the MITI ban will be required to report to MITI in advance as to the facilities they will install to facilitate the treatment and disposal of PCB-containing waste.

Following the MITI announcement, the Sharp Corporation said it would entirely replace all PCB containing parts by the end of May in their electric appliance manufacturing operations. Sharp believes that the use of a substitute for PCB will not lead to any increase in production costs.

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Scientific Representative

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March 29, 1972

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RW Roberts

Subject: Yeasts Discovered that Decompose PCB

In a recent report (MM-72-60) a description of MITI's ban on further use of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) by Japanese industry was given. Today the Japan Times reported that Professor Yoshio Sakagami of the Tokyo Institute of Technology has discovered two yeast-like "bugs" which decompose PCB. The two yeasts are:

- 1) Rhodotorula - a red yeast found in the soil in Ibaraki Prefecture
- 2) Pityrosporum - found in the soil of Higashi-Murayama.

Professor Sakagami has conducted tests on more than 1000 micro-organisms collected from all over Japan. In his experiments, he put the yeasts in solutions containing 2500 ppm of PCB and after 1 week found that the Rhodotorula had decomposed 40% of the PCB and the Pityrosporum about 30%.

The article states that the mechanism is as yet unknown as are the decomposition products. This could possibly allow MITI to reverse its ban if the decomposition products prove to be harmless.

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April 10, 1972

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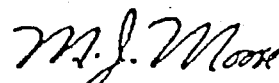
cc: WD Bellamy
RE Brooks
JF Brown
WR Kanne
RA Koehler
OH LeBlanc

Subject: Power Generation Company to Drop PCB-Containing Equipment

On Monday, (March 3) Kansai Electric Power Company (Osaka) notified domestic makers of transformers, capacitors and other heavy electrical equipment accessories of its decision to stop using any equipment containing polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB). Kansai is the second-largest of Japan's nine electric power utility companies. This is just one more act on the part of government and/or industry in the face of mounting public pressure over the PCB pollution problem. Kansai thus became the first Japanese power company to discontinue the use of all equipment containing PCB as a insulator. Kansai officials have said that equipment purchases will be made only from those companies that have switched to mineral-oil.

This means that the so-called "dry" type of equipment - used extensively in Japan until about 30 years ago - is expected to make a comeback. Kansai has made the demand retroactive to cover equipment already on order. As a further precaution against possible pollution, the approximately 3,250 PCB - containing units now in use in Kansai installations will be watched closely for leakage.

It is particularly interesting to note that the power generating companies and railway systems are exempt from the recent MITI ban on the use of PCB in electrical equipment. Even so, Kansai has elected to discontinue use of PCB containing equipment (public image ?) and it is expected that the other eight power companies will follow suit.



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April 18, 1972

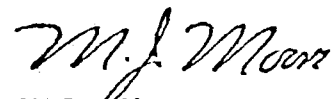
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cc: LT Baker
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RW Roberts
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RE Brooks

Subject: More on the PCB Problem

N. Saito, Health and Welfare Minister, promised Friday (April 14) that his ministry will set provisional national standards to control contamination of foodstuffs in Japan by PCB. These standards are expected to be published within the next two months. They are expected to be even more stringent than existing standards in foreign countries. The possibility exists that all fish and marine products taken from badly contaminated coastal areas will be banned from domestic or export markets.

Japan has only two manufacturers of PCB: Kanegafuchi Chemical Industries Co. and Mitsubishi Monsanto Chemical Co., a semi-American firm. Mitsubishi Monsanto stopped production in March and Kanegafuchi will discontinue production in June. These two companies will be made to retrieve about 70% of the PCB now in use as a heat transmitting medium and dispose of it in a manner specified by MITI.



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APR 27 1972

E. L. SIMONS

April 19, 1972

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cc: M. Aven
WD Bellamy
JA Mirabal
ES Simons (RECO)

Subject: PCB Found in Rice Near Capacitor Plant

Samples of unpolished rice harvested in 1971 in paddies near an electric capacitor factory in Kusatsu (near Kyoto) have been found to be contaminated with PCB. Grains of rice contained up to 1.33 ppm of PCB.

The Pollution Control Service of the Shiga Prefectural Government made this announcement on April 17 and named Nichicon Capacitor, Ltd. as a suspect. Nichicon has been using PCB in capacitors until last month when it discontinued the use of PCB following a MITI ban.

It is suspected that years of use of PCB by Nichicon has contaminated the area.

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