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1800 Monsanto to End Toxic Item Output

ST. LOUIS — Monsanto Co. said last week that it will withdraw from the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) market by the end of October, 1977.

The action followed passage of a toxic substances bill by Congress which requires that production of PCBs be halted in 2 years and sales in 2½ years.

The Special Chemicals division of Monsanto Industrial Chemicals produced 37 million pounds of PCBs last year and is the sole domestic manufacturer of the chemical, a company spokesman said. Prior to 1971, Monsanto produced 85 million pounds of PCBs, he said.

While the company has conducted research on specialty chemicals to replace PCBs, "We realize that specialty chemicals would not be competitive with commodity items," the spokesman said.

The compound has been used extensively as a dielectric insulating fluid by transformer and capacitor manufacturers, but has been criticized because of its harmful effect on the environment. The toxic synthetic compound is non-biodegradable and has been shown by the Environmental Protection Agency to be accumulating in water supplies and some aquatic life.

Earle H. Harbison, Jr., general manager Special Chemicals division, said an earlier halting of PCB manufacture would have been scheduled, had transformer and capacitor manufacturers' timetables permitted.

Halting production of the compound will affect about 20 of the plant's 1,800 employes, the company said.

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OCT 6 1976

Monsanto to Drop PCBs

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — Monsanto Co., the nation's leading supplier of polychlorinated biphenyls, used as electric insulators, said Tuesday that it would stop production of the chemicals by Oct. 31, 1977, because of possible hazardous effects on humans.

Monsanto said the long elimination period would give time for manufacturers to find substitutes. Some developed by the electrical industry are being tested, although they may not prove as effective in resisting fire.

The Environmental Protection Agency, which had called polychlorinated biphenyls a "significant hazard to human health and the environment," welcomed Monsanto's decision.

"The Monsanto decision is a significant step in dealing with the total problem of PCB contamination," said Administrator Russell E. Train.

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Monsanto Halting PCB Manufacturing

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."

PCB has been blamed as a major source of pollution in New York's Hudson River.

New York State officials and the General Electric Co. recently reached agreement for GE to contribute $3 million toward the cost of cleaning PCBs from the Hudson.

The accumulation of PCBs in waterways, Harbison said, triggered the firm's decision to cease production as soon as the electrical industry could find alternate fluids and convert its equipment and components to their use.

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

The chemical is manufactured at a Monsanto plant in Sauget, Ill. Twenty jobs will be eliminated by the decision to withdraw from the PCB market, but a company spokesman said employes working in those positions would be shifted to other work at the plant.