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Monsanto to phase out PCBs

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — Monsanto Co. Monday said it plans to phase out the manufacture of a toxic group of chemicals known as PCBs, which environmentalists contend are threatening public health and the nation's rivers and lakes.

F. J. Fitzgerald, a corporate vice president, said he could not give an exact timetable for the phase-out but "it would be in a planned and orderly manner."

"As soon as we are satisfied that the electrical power supply industry's needs for usable, acceptable alternate dielectric fluids have been met, by whomever, Monsanto will voluntarily shut down its PCB manufacturing unit," Fitzgerald said.

MONSANTO IS THE sole maker of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl), which is used primarily as a nonconductor of direct electrical current. The chemical has been a necessary ingredient in most power-generating equipment.

PCBs have been used in manufacturing processes since 1930, but their presence as toxic substances in the environment was not detected until 1966 because they were confused with DDT, with which they have a similar chemical structure.

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