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Monsanto phases out hazardous chemicals

Production of polychlorinated biphenyls — a man-made chemical hazardous to human health and certain wildlife — will be phased out by The Monsanto Company of St. Louis.

And Ontario Environment Minister George Kerr said he was happy to learn of such a move that would end "this senseless contamination of our environment."

Last year, Kerr's department served notice on all industries in Ontario which were using PCBs to begin a search for alternate, harmless materials. The move followed an announcement by the Ontario Ministry of Health that high PCB levels had been found in Coho salmon taken from the Credit River.

People were warned against eating more than one meal per week of Great Lakes salmon.

Approximately 50% of the samples showed levels of PCB in excess of the existing U.S. guidelines of five parts per million for human consumption. There had been no previous Canadian guideline, but the Department of National Health established a temporary guideline of two parts per million for PCBs in fish last November.

PCBs were first developed in the 1920s and used in the manufacture of paints, printing inks, plastics and insulating fluid in electrical transformers.

Monsanto is the only producer in North America, and in 1972 it voluntarily limited its sales to use in totally enclosed systems, such as electrical transformers and capacitators. However, there is a possibility of leakage.

All PCB users now return scrap or waste PCBs to Monsanto for disposal, or ship them to the Chemtrol Disposal facility in Lewiston, New York.

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