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Evidence mounts

As the probe of polychlorinated biphenals (PCBs) grows across the country more damaging evidence is surfacing.

Mobil Corp. announced recently that 7 of 92 workers who were exposed to PCBs from 1963 to 1968 at its Paulsboro, N.J. refinery developed cancer. Six have died and Mobil says two of the deaths are attributable to PCBs which the company used at the time.

Monsanto Co., the nation's only producer of PCBs, reveals in a yet unpublished report that an abnormally high number of its deceased workers have died of lung cancer.

A report from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare last week stated that PCBs were found in mothers' milk in tests in 10 different states.

And two researchers from South Dakota State University, Yvonne and Algirdas Greichus, told an American Chemical Society convention that PCBs have shown up in dangerous quantities in such unlikely places as lakes near South Africa's Hartbeespoort Dam.

These reports don't do anything to ease the fear and anxiety of Bloomington area residents who have been exposed to PCBs.

And it makes all the more important intensified research in and around Bloomington and Monroe County to learn more about the levels of contamination.

The movement towards halting the use of PCBs is gaining. One industry report indicates that within 18 to 22 months the conversion to substitutes for PCBs will be complete and the discharge in the interim will be significantly reduced.

This won't, however, provide the answers to the gnawing questions causing so many in this area considerable agony.

What are the levels of danger? What can or can't be consumed? Just how dangerous a situation is it? How can the danger be reduced?

Halting the use of PCBs won't answer these questions. It will only provide some measure of protection for those of a future generation.

Only intensive research will provide these answers, research that is agonizingly slow in getting started at the federal and state level where the initiative will have to come because only the agencies at those two levels have the facilities, the expertise and the manpower to conduct the necessary tests.