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Blanket cord dangerous

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

Monsanto said the phasing out of production over the next year would give time for manufacturers to find substitute materials for PCB. Substitutes developed by the electrical industry are being tested, although they may not prove as effective in resisting fire as PCB.

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

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

"Environmental contamination will continue to be a problem due to the millions of PCBs already in landfills, soils, river and lake sediments, in our air and water and in wildlife and human tissue. This contamination will be there for years—moving into life systems, including humans."

Monsanto said last January it would eventually stop production of PCB but no date was set. Polychlorinated biphenyl has been used since about 1930 as fire-resistant fluids and electric insulating in capacitors and transformers.

Monsanto once made as much as 85 million pounds of PCB a year, but that production has dropped to about 37,000 pounds in recent years as fears about environmental damage mounted.

Monsanto's American production of PCB was handled by about 38 employes at the firm's plant in Sauget, Ill., across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, and the firm said probably no employes would lose jobs because of phasing out of PCB. Total employment at the plant is 1,300. Monsanto said sales of PCB amounted to less than half a per cent of Monsanto's business.

Monsanto also makes PCB at a plant in England, and production there also will be phased out, although on no timetable.

PCB-filled transformers are used in high-rise buildings, hospitals and schools and in electrically powered urban commuter trains. Their function is to either increase or reduce voltage or change the current in the system. Capacitors containing PCB are used to control voltage and reduce power losses in fluorescent and mercury lights, AC motors, airconditioning compressors and television receivers.

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