



RALEIGH, N. C.
NEWS & OBSERVER
D. 127,409 — S. 160,323
RALEIGH METROPOLITAN AREA

AUG 13 1978

Soil removal eyed

Officials press for action on PCB

State environmentalists say they must do something soon either to remove or to stabilize chemically a toxic substance dumped along 250 miles of Eastern North Carolina roads.

They say the chemicals — polychlorinated biphenyl compounds (PCBs) — pose no immediate threat to human health.

But environmentalists acknowledge that the chemicals already may have contaminated water and food sources and therefore may have entered the human food chain.

What to do about the PCBs was the subject of a meeting today that involved officials from several state agencies and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The officials planned to consider proposals from

four companies capable of excavating the contaminated roadside soil. But first, the officials were to decide whether excavation is necessary.

If it isn't, activated charcoal may be added to the soil to permanently bind the PCBs, making excavation unnecessary.

"We have reached the point where it appears that something has to be done," said Robert A. Carter, the state environmentalist who is directing the PCB cleanup.

But Carter and other officials said they don't know when a decision is likely.

PCBs, an oily liquid used as insulation in transformers and capacitors, were dumped along the roads early this month in an apparent attempt to circumvent new federal standards for the disposal of hazardous industrial wastes.

The standards, contained in the Toxic Substances Control Act, took effect April 18. If EPA officials determine the act was violated, the federal government could decide the contaminated soil must be removed.

Dr. Martin P. Hines, chief of the epidemiology section of the state Department of Human Resources,

today said the PCB has been traced to a type manufactured by the Monsanto Chemical Corp. in the late 1960s. It was used, he said, as a heat transferring agent in cooking and in electrical transformers and capacitors.

John Dickinson, chemical engineer with EPA, said there have been other PCB spills around the country in recent years, but never one over as large an area as in North Carolina.

State law enforcement authorities who are investigating the case said today they have no new leads.

The results of soil samples taken from the contaminated roadsides were released today, and state officials were trying to decide what concentration of PCB compounds in the soil is tolerable.

The figure which has been mentioned as a safe upper limit for PCBs is 500 parts per million. That number was surpassed in samples taken from most roadside dumping sites — including several in Wake and nearby Johnston and Harnett counties.

When humans eat food or drink water contaminated by PCBs, the compounds remain indefinitely in the body's fatty tissues.