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Monsanto announces end to production of PCBs

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ST. LOUIS — Monsanto Co., the nation's leading supplier of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), said Tuesday it will 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.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 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," Train said.

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.

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, air-conditioning compressors and television receivers.

Monsanto once made as much as 86-million pounds of PCB a year, but that production has dropped to about 27,000 pounds in recent years as fears about environmental damage mounted.

Monsanto said substitutes developed by the electrical industry currently are being tested to determine the most acceptable replacement although it may not prove as effective in resisting fire as PCBs.

PCB HAS been blamed as a major source of pollution in New York's Hudson River.

The New York Environmental Conservation Department and the General Electric Co. reached agreement recently for GE to contribute some \$3-million toward the cost of cleaning PCBs from the Hudson.

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