Monsanto Sets Withdrawal From PCB Market in 1977

ST. LOUIS - Monsanto Co. said it will withdraw completely from the polychlorinated biphenyl, or PCB, market "no later than Oct. 31, 1977."

Under the toxic substances bill passed by Congress last week, all PCB production must cease within two years, and sales within 2½ years.

PCBs or dielectric insulating fluids are used in transformers and capacitors for electrical power generation. Monsanto said PCBs are preferred because PCB-filled capacitors fail infrequently and, therefore, in some parts of the country fire, insurance, building and electrical codes and regulations require PCB use in high-density population applications.

In recent years, however, concern has been growing over the potentially dangerous toxic effects to the environment of PCBs, which are synthetic chlorinated organic compounds that resist biodegradation.

In 1970 Monsanto, the principal supplier, began restricting use of its PCBs to closed electrical systems for which an alternative didn't exist. In January the company said it would cease production of PCBs as soon as the electrical industry could find alternate fluids and convert equipment to their use.

Monsanto said it appears that "the industry has zeroed in on replacement candidates" and is field-testing non-PCB electrical components. The company also said the prospective replacements "appear to provide acceptable dielectric performance, but system redesign has been required to circumvent the fire hazard potential which was introduced."