

Friday
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PCB Dumping On N.C. Roads Angers Officials

Observer Staff And Wire Reports

RALEIGH — Whoever dumped a cancer-causing chemical along at least 70 — and perhaps 200 — miles of North Carolina highways probably has broken seven state laws.

N.C. Attorney General Rufus Edmisten said Thursday he'd like to throw the book at the culprit.

"What I'd like to do is catch these people and throw the book at them," Edmisten said, "because we're talking about something that is wanton and willful and it incenses me."

Gov. Jim Hunt posted a \$2,500 reward Thursday for information leading to arrest and conviction of those responsible for spilling polychlorinated biphenyl — PCB — along 70 miles of highways in Alamance, Chatham, Franklin, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Moore and Warren counties. State investigators are testing about 130 additional miles of highways which also may be contaminated — in Wake, Nash, Chatham, Warren, Wilson, Edgecombe and Lee counties.

State officials have speculated someone may have dumped the chemicals to avoid complying with a federal law which went into effect Aug. 1. The law strictly controls disposal of PCBs, used in manufacture and repair of electrical transformers at a number of North Carolina plants. The chemical causes cancer in laboratory animals.

Dr. Martin Hines, director of the Epidemiology Branch of the Department of Human Resources, said tests are being made to determine whether PCBs have gotten into wells or been consumed by cattle. He said officials doubt PCBs would seep or be washed into water supplies because they are not water soluble.

State officials have been flooded with calls from residents in the affected areas.

Edmisten said four State Bureau of Investigation agents are assigned to the case and an investigator for his office's Environmental Protection Division is coordinating activities of several state agencies involved in the case.

Don Flowers, Alamance County manager, said Thursday he is angry, too.

"PCB is toxic — very," he said. "It not only offends me, it (the deliberate dumping) offends the citizens of this county as well."

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