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Could lead to legislation

PCBs still found in fish

By RPN Washington News Bureau
WASHINGTON, D.C.—Mounting evidence in recent months of continued high concentrations in fish of polychlorinated biphenyls—a widely-used group of industrial chemicals considered a source of possible birth defects when ingested by humans and animals—has prompted government-wide concern, raising the possibility of new regulatory controls on the use and, in particular, the disposal of such chemicals.

Polychlorinated biphenyls—or PCBs—are most commonly used as insulating fluid in electrical devices, such as transformers and condensers.

They are also used as hydraulic fluids, lubricants, heat transfer fluids and as plasticizers in such things as adhesives, sealants, printing inks, coatings and waxes.

Sole U.S. producer of PCBs is Monsanto Chemicals Co., although some is imported from foreign manufacturers. In 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), acting on the strength of a special governmental task force, won an agreement from Monsanto that the firm would limit PCB sales solely to manufacturers of so-called closed electrical devices, such as trans-

formers, thereby hopefully reducing environmental contamination from "open" sources.

EPA NOW says, however, that despite the 1972 action, high concentrations of PCBs have persisted in such common edible fish as salmon and striped bass in a number of U.S. waterways including the Great Lakes, the upper Mississippi, the Gulf of Mexico and the Hudson River.

In an effort to explore possible further methods to combat PCB contamination, EPA will host a special conference at the Pick Congress Hotel in Chicago, November 19 to 21.

A number of other agencies, including the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration will participate along with state and local agencies and representatives from private sector sciences and industry.

The conference will also focus on the health hazards of PCBs and is expected to have serious impact on both commercial and sport fishing.

Persons interested in attending should write: Franklin A. Ayer, Research Triangle Institute, P.O. Box 12194, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709.

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