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Blame Plant For PCBs Found In Waterways

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INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The concentration of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) isn't too threatening when it starts out in waste water, but it increases as the chemical progresses through the food chain, the Indiana Board of Health said.

The chemical, believed to be cancer causing, is mainly used as an insulating fluid in transformers and large capacitators. And Monroe County officials have blamed the Westinghouse plant in Bloomington for PCBs found in area waterways.

Signs now are posted warning that fish are unfit to eat if they're caught in the East Fork of the White River.

Health officials said the fish absorb PCBs from the water and other organisms, increasing its concentration. Livestock also can take in the chemical when they graze on land where sludge containing the PCBs was used as fertilizer.

The PCBs again are concentrated if contaminated fish, meat or milk from the livestock is eaten by humans.

The board maintained that a potential danger will exist in the future because the substance does not dissipate, but grows stronger.

State health officials are supporting legislation enacted this year in Indiana to phase out the use of the chemical. In January, Monsanto, the sole American producer of PCBs, said it would phase out the chemical when an acceptable substitute is found.

Environmentalist groups are pressing for federal legislaton that would eventually ban PCBs.

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