A Contaminant Is Found in Cardbo

By RICHARD D. LYONS
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 27—The Food and Drug Administration announced today that it had found high levels of the chemical contaminant PCB in shredded wheat packed in recycled cardboard.

An agency spokesman said that since the finding last June, the manufacturers of the cardboard and the food companies had stopped using the type of cardboard that caused the contamination.

The cardboard had apparently been made of different kinds of waste paper, including carbonless copying paper, which is made with PCB. PCB is chemically akin to the insecticide DDT and PCB contamination has recently been found in eggs, chickens, turkeys, salmon and fish meal.

A spokesman for the F.D.A. said the PCB had been detected during a routine analysis of food products based on the foods that a 19-year-old youth might routinely eat.

A composite sample of cereal products showed that 0.4 parts per million of PCB was present. When the components of the sample were individually examined, the cause was traced to the shredded wheat. The spokesman said the PCB contamination of varius brands of shredded wheat ranged from 1 part per million to 24 parts per million.

The spokesman said that the F.D.A. was now testing 15 other food products packed in recycled paper to determine if they, too were contaminated. The products range from frozen fruit juices to potato chips.

The agency's technicians found that the levels of PCB in the cardboard packing ranges from 1 p.p.m. to 433 p.p.m.

Tolerance guidelines established by the F.D.A. for PCB in food range from 0.5 for eggs to 5 p.p.m. for fish and poultry.

PCB contamination in cooking oil in Japan three years ago killed five persons and afflicted 1,000 others with a severe form of acne. The chemical is also known to cause liver damage and malformations in birds and fish.

The substance, which is gradually being eliminated from industrial products, decomposes very slowly, thus lingering in the environment. Its use has been banned in Britain and is rapidly declining in the United States.

MONS 033559