

EPA TO CURB PCB USES AS RECOMMENDED BY FEDERAL TASK FORCE

A six-month study of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), conducted by a task force representing eight Federal agencies, has recommended that all current uses of PCBs except in electrical capacitors and transformers, be discontinued. The study found that: (1) PCBs caused birth defects as well as skin and liver ailments in laboratory rats; (2) PCBs are linked with adverse effects on certain forms of animal life which encounter the chemicals in the environment; (3) like DDT, which it resembles chemically, PCBs compounds retain toxicity for years and are able to build up in fatty tissues of animals; and (4) PCBs are widely dispersed throughout the environment and can have adverse ecological and toxicological effects.

The report has asked that: (1) PCBs be restricted to essential or non-replaceable uses which involve minimal direct human contact; (2) PCBs not be banned -- that they be allowed to continue in use as insulating fluid in transformers and electrical capacitors where substitutes have been shown to greatly increase chances of fire and explosion; and (3) broad Federal authority be implemented to restrict use or distribution of PCBs, to control imports, and to collect information. Acting on the report's recommendation, the Environmental Protection Agency agreed to restrict discharges of industrial effluents of PCBs so that levels in rivers and lakes do not exceed 0.01 parts per billion.

The Food and Drug Administration proposed new and strict regulations on Mar. 18, which included measures to prevent PCBs in food packaging, contamination of food from accidents in food plants, and leaks in food machinery such as that which contaminated poultry feed four times in the past 18 months, causing 487,000 chickens and turkeys to be withheld from market. PCBs can have adverse effects on human health but so far as is known, these effects do not occur as a result of PCB levels currently in environment.

PCBs are widely manufactured in Japan, Italy, France, West Germany, Russia, and possibly in Brazil, Argentina, India, and East Germany; therefore, ways to monitor imported electrical supplies containing PCBs is of prime concern. This needed control would be provided if the Administration's Toxic Substances Control Act, now pending before Congress, is passed. The sole U.S. producer of PCBs, Monsanto Co., has already reported voluntarily discontinuing sales of PCBs for use in paints, plasticizers, sealants, adhesives, and all other open-system uses.

As an additional measure, the U.S. has asked Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to review member state's national policies concerning PCBs and to identify products moving in international trade which contain PCBs.

The 192-page report entitled "PCBs and the Environment" has detailed information on production, use and distribution of PCBs and benefits of chemicals, the effects of PCBs on man and wildlife, and other data related to the problem. It is available at \$6.00 from National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Va. 22151.

NSF GRANTS \$377,000 FOR STUDY OF POLLUTANTS DEPOSITED ON OCEAN FROM AIR

A National Science Foundation grant of \$377,000 for a two-year study on how pollutants in the air are carried over and deposited on the ocean with their subsequent effect on sea life, has been awarded to group of seven scientists, all but one from the University of Rhode Island. Principal investigator for the project and associate professor at the URI Graduate School, Dr. Robert A. Duca, said the project is a continuation of one last year which found a layer of water five-thousandths of an inch thick on surface of Narragansett Bay enriched with lead, iron, nickel, copper, fatty acids, petroleum and chlorinated hydrocarbons. Particulated lead has been found by URI scientists not only in Bay but in Antarctica. Duca said, ocean surface receives pollutants from rain or dry fallout; and from pollutants present in sewage and industrial effluents carried to the surface by rising bubbles.

A 60-foot instrument tower, located on west coast of Bermuda, by Sargasso Sea, will measure pollutants transported by air from continent to the island's vicinity by prevailing offshore winds. Operating by Sept. 1, the tower will be located on land owned by Naval Underwater Systems Center in New London, Conn., and will measure air samples for lead, vanadium, iron, nickel, zinc and other heavy metals in atmospheric particulates, in addition to organic compounds such as lipids, and petroleum and chlorinated hydrocarbons in the forms of DDT, aldrin, dieldrin and PCBs.