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Monsanto firm protects buyer

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — The Monsanto Co., which manufactures polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) has refused to disclose who buys the industrial chemicals, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission said Monday.

However, Lonnie Dye, the commission's chief engineer, told the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA) that eventually the source of the PCBs in the Mississippi River will be traced.

Monsanto is the only United States firm which manufactures PCBs, which have been found in fish taken from the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers and Lake Superior.

PCBs are believed to cause birth defects and reproductive failures in fish, birds and mammals.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the PCA said PCBs have been found in groundwater near Winona in southeastern Minnesota, but concentrations are not believed dangerous.

It had been discovered earlier that PCBs were present in a Winona junkyard, where machinery oils had been dumped. However, the PCA said tests showed most of the chemical from the spilled oil apparently remained in the ground and didn't drain into the ground water.

Sens. Walter F. Mondale and Hubert H. Humphrey, D-Minn., expressed displeasure when they learned of Monsanto's refusal to divulge information about purchasers of the chemicals.

Mondale said PCBs should be prohibited, and added that at least "we ought to know" who's using the chemical.

Humphrey said the chemical should be disposed of more safely.

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GE says PCB ban perils two North Country plants

In response to a state proposal that the dumping of PCB a toxic chemical, into the Hudson River be banned by next Septembpr, a General Electric Co.' official predicts that such action might force the closing of GE plants at Hudson Falls and Fort Edward.

Referring to a hearing set for Oct. 6 to obtain such a ban, Stuart Richel, an environmental attorney for GE, said: "If indeed an order results from the hearing and subsequent decision-making process ordering the company to comply with something it cannot comply with, there will be some consideration made on our part to the options open to us, including closing the plants."

The hearing was requested by Ogden R. Reid, commissioner of the state Environmental Conservation Department (En-Con), who said that PCB put into the river for more than 20 years may have caused irreparable damage.

"We know of no equipment we can buy that will enable us to guarantee complete elimination of PCB down to zero," said Dr. Edward L. Simons, manager of GE's environmental protection agency. He said considerable effort is being taken by the company to minimize discharges of the chemical.

The Hudson Falls and Fort Edward plants, which use PCB in making electrical capacitors and transformers, employ 1,300 persons.

GE officials said the company four years ago stopped dumping the type of PCB found recently in river fish.

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