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Firm to Halt Production of Chemical PCB

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co. will halt production of PCB insulating fluids next year because of the public's fear of adverse effects from the chemical.

Monsanto will withdraw completely from the market no later than Oct. 31, 1977, said Earle H. Harbison Jr., general manager of the firm's specialty chemicals division.

Harbison said Tuesday the target date would have been sooner, but electrical transformer and capacitor manufacturers have said they would be unable to convert to other materials any earlier.

Monsanto is the only manufacturer of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl), a stable, fire-resistant chemical.

The Environmental Protection Agency has found that PCBs build up in the environment and are thought to cause reproductive failures, gastric disorders and skin lesions in mammals.

About 300 million pounds of the virtually indestructible chemical have been dumped into landfills, leaked into water supplies and allowed to sift into production sites, the EPA contends.

EPA Administrator Russell E. Train praised Monsanto's decision, terming it "a significant step in dealing with the total problem of PCB contamination."

But he noted that PCBs already in the environment "will be there for years, moving into life systems, including humans."

PCB has been blamed as a major source of pollution in New York's Hudson River.

New York State officials and the General Electric Co. recently reached agreement for GE to contribute $3 million toward the cost of cleaning PCBs from the Hudson.

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Monsanto stops producing fluids

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ST. LOUIS (AP) — Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co., the only U.S. manufacturer of the controversial PCB insulating fluids, announced Monday that it will quit producing the fluids by late next year.

Earle H. Harbison Jr., general manager of Monsanto's specialty chemicals division, said the firm will complete distribution of all inventories and withdraw completely from the market no later than Oct. 31, 1977.

The target date would be even sooner, Harbison said, but electrical transformer and capacitor manufacturers have said they would be unable to convert to other materials any earlier.

PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) is a stable, fire-resistant chemical that is used widely in transformers and capacitors.

"Unfortunately," Harbison said, "the very properties that have made PCBs useful and even mandatory for these essential uses, were also found in the early 1970s to be the properties causing them to persist and accumulate in the environment."

PCB has been blamed as a major source of pollution in New York's Hudson River.

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