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Insulating Fluid Will Be Dropped

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co., the only U.S. manufacturer of the controversial polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) dielectric insulating fluids, announced Tuesday 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 by no later than Oct. 31, 1977.

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

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

"Unfortuantely," Harbison added, "the very properties that have made PCBs ideal 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."

That fact, he said, triggered the firm's decision to cease production as soon as the electrical industry could find viable alternate fluids and convert its equipment and components to their use