San Francisco, CA
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Examiner
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State to bar some toxic waste disposal

1407

SACRAMENTO (UPI) — Land disposal of liquid hazardous wastes containing high concentrations of PCB, strong acids and heavy metals will be prohibited in California starting next year under action announced by the state.

Health Services Director Peter Rank said new regulations will require that such hazardous wastes be recycled or treated, either at treatment facilities of major companies or at several off-site treatment facilities.

The land disposal ban marks the second stage of a two-year phaseout of land disposal of many highly toxic hazardous wastes in the state under regulations prepared last year by the Department of Health Services.

The first stage was initiated last June when liquid cyanide wastes were banned from land disposal.

About 85,000 tons of acid wastes and 80,000 tons of metal wastes are disposed of on land each year in California.

PCB wastes have already been banned from land disposal in the state by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The California ban on PCB waste land disposal would render moot any future relaxation of the EPA ban, the Health Services Department said yesterday.

It said the landfill restriction regulations are designed to shift away from "obsolescent burial of toxic wastes" and instead use waste treatment and recycling technology that is safer for humans and the environment.

The department said implementation of the ban was triggered by Rank's determination that there will be sufficient recycling treatment facilities fully operational in California by Jan. 1 to process substantially all the affected areas.

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Toxic PCBs leak in Haight-Ashbury

1405

A PG&E pole transformer ruptured shortly before 3 p.m. yesterday in the Haight-Ashbury and leaked oil containing small amounts of toxic PCBs, the utility said.

Spokesman Chuck Peterson said the leak, on Shrader near Waller Street, messed up two cars and a nearby building, and required an extensive cleanup.

He said samples of the oil were found to contain 25 parts per million PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). A count of 50 ppm may be a health hazard.

Fifty PG&E customers were without electricity for several hours after the transformer went out.

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S.F. officials reopen toxic spill work area

1407

Mercury News Services

With the stamp of approval of San Francisco health officials, about 1,000 employees of Standard Oil Co. of California are expected to return today to a building closed last Friday by a cloud of toxic smoke.

The 22-story corporate headquarters building was closed after a Pacific Gas & Electric Co. transformer containing 500 gallons of PCB-laced oil ruptured, sending toxic smoke from a sidewalk manhole.

According to Dr. Richard Wade, the city's toxic materials expert, the building's cafeteria will remain closed at least until Wednesday. PG&E officials said a new transformer had been installed and cleanup was expected to be complete today.

PCB, or polychlorinated biphenyl, is a suspected cancer-causing material that once was commonly used as an insulator in electrical transformers.

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