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Officials watchful over PCB-sludge

By DON JORDAN
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Samples of grass clipped from fields where city sewage sludge laden with poly chlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) has been spread as a fertilizer are being tested by the Utilities Department and the Indiana State Board of Health.

City Chemist Rick Peoples collected the samples following revelations that PCBs were present in city sewage sludge. While federal test results of the city's dried sludge were never released, the city has found the toxic compounds in the sludge.

Peoples said he had "five or ten" calls from individuals who had been using sludge on agricultural lands. Peoples explained that there is no information available about PCB absorbtion by plants.

Indiana Stream Pollution Control Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials visited Bloomington last Friday and spoke with the city chemist.

"We asked them what they think we should do (about the sludge on fields), and they said they didn't know," said Peoples.

Both the state and the EPA are to continue testing of local waters for PCBs in an attempt to further detail the extent of PCB pollution in local waters.

While the local Westinghouse plant has admitted their use and discharge of PCBs, the state is looking for other sources as well.

The Indiana State Board of Health has warned against eating fish taken from Clear Creek or from Salt Creek between Oolitic and the confluence of those two streams.

Peoples expressed satisfaction that the state and federal agencies involved in the PCB hunt have initiated communications with the city.

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