Holyoke Daily Transcript
Holyoke Telegram
HOLYOKE, MASS.
D. 27,81[illegible]

SEP 4 1976

Monsanto Reports High Cancer Rate In PCB Workers

ST. LOUIS (AP) -- Monsanto Co. reports a preliminary study has found a higher than normal incidence of lungcancer among deceased workers who were once employed in its plant that produces polycholorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

However, said Dr. George Roush, director of the company's medical and environmental health department, there is no indication that the presence of the disease was related to PCBs.

Roush also said the study has shown no cases of malignant melanoma or pancreatic cancer among current or former employes of the unit.

Roush said study results also have shown that workers in the PCB unit lived longer than the national average.

Roush said the lung cancer findings were based on "raw information" and require a controlled study. Monsanto said it expects to complete its investigation in 12 to 18 months.

The Monsanto information, disclosed in a news release, was based on a review of the records of more than 300 current and former employes at its sole PCB production unit at Sauget, Ill., since 1936.

ST. CLOUD, MINN.
TIMES
D. 24,500

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Cancer link sought in PCB workers

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PCBs, fire-resistant chemicals used mainly as insulating fluids in electrical equipment such as high-power transformers, have been termed a significant health hazard by the Environmental Protection Agency. They have been shown to cause reproductive failures, gastric disorders and skin lesions in mammals.

Monsanto, the only American manufacturer of PCBs, announced in January it intends to phase out production of the chemical.

A recent Mobil Oil Corp. study reported finding three cases of melanoma and two cases of pancreatic cancer among 72 employes who had been exposed to a PCB product while working at a Mobil plant in New Jersey, Monsanto said.