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Cancer, chemicals linked at Mobil plant

By Leslie Wayne
Inquirer Staff Writer

PAULSBORO, N.J. — The first correlation between exposure to Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) a widely used group of industrial compounds, and an increased incidence of human cancer has bee reported at the Mobil Oil Co. refinery fire.

Mobil said that seven of 129 workers exposed to PCBs at the Paulsboro plant between 1949 and 1957 had contracted cancer. Two of these workers have died.

If this link pans out, these are very significant findings," said Dr. Roscoe Moore, an epidemiologist with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in Rockville, Md. But I caution this is very preliminary and needs to be studied further."

Mobil reported the cancer findings in a letter Thursday to the editor of the New England Journal of Medicine. The discovery wah made during routine medical checks of all plant employes, according to a Mobil spokesman.

More than 12,000 American workers currently are exposed to PCBs a group of more than 200 synthetic chlorinated organic compounds.

Between 1949 and 1957, the Paulsboro refinery used a PCB compound manufactured by Monsanto first in laboratory research and later in the manufacture of an industrial refining catalyst.

Of the seven persons who contracted cancer, three contracted skin cancer, two had cancer of the pancreas, one had cancer of the colon and one had cancer of the bone narrow and a cancerous tumor on the right thigh.

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