Officials to check PCB areas

From Staff Reports

HALIFAX — State officials will inspect a stretch of PCB-tainted roadway next week to determine whether highway crews dug up contaminated dirt and dumped it in a Halifax County landfill.

Some Halifax County citizens have been complaining recently about Department of Transportation work along N.C. 4 south of Littleton in the past two weeks. They have claimed that PCB-laced soil has been disturbed.

David E. Kelly, assistant secretary of crime control and public safety, said Friday that laboratory tests would be made if an inspection indicates that tainted soil had been disturbed.

Kelly said state policy called for every effort to be made to keep PCB-contaminated areas from being disturbed. "Indications are at this point (that workers) simply lifted the asphalt and dug down beneath. They took pains not to disturb the shoulder."

But Halifax County officials on Friday remained concerned about the work. Grover E. Howell, a county commissioner from Weldon, said the state should accept full responsibility for any problems that may ensue from the construction.

"We don't want any more problems," Howell said. "We want the state to have full responsibility for whatever takes place."

A letter from R.F. Coleman, state director of the Division of Highways, to Halifax County commissioners last week indicated that caution would be used in the repair of approximately 4.6 miles of N.C. 4 between Littleton and

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their New York warehouse.

Hollister in western Halifax County, one of a number of highways where PCB was dumped in the summer of 1978.

Because it is highly resistant to heat, PCB at one time was used widely in electrical equipment as an insulator. Its use for that purpose has since been banned.

John A. Little, deputy regional administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Atlanta, said in a telephone interview that he felt "pretty confident" that the state would prevent any contamination from occurring.

Laboratory tests conducted by EPA and private scientists have shown that rats and rhesus monkeys develop cancers, liver disorders and reproductive problems when fed large, continuous doses of the chemical.

He agreed that an inspection of the area should be made and laboratory tests conducted if it appears that the contaminated soil had been disturbed.

PCB — polychlorinated biphenyl — was illegally dumped along 210 miles of state roads in late July and August 1978. Three men later pleaded guilty in federal court, saying they had been paid to dispose of the oil but dumped it because they couldn't afford to haul it to

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