Contaminants to be hauled to landfills

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first to include a door-to-door public health effort.

The governor said memos — warning farmers to keep their livestock away from contaminated roadsides, but assuring that humans face no immediate health risks — would be hand-delivered to residents along exposed highways.

Although several residents, including 28-year-old tobacco farmer T. Mitchell Langdon, who discovered the first oily stain along N.C. 210 between Smithfield and Angier, complained of nausea and headaches earlier this month, state health officials resisted any outreach effort.

Human Resources Secretary Sarah T. Morrow, for one, suggested it might cause panic.

PCBs, polychlorinated biphenyls, are suspected of triggering "chemical errors" in humans that have led to a variety of health problems including disfiguring acne, numbness in the limbs and liver disorders.

These sort of problems have come after long exposures, though, and the sickness in Johnston County has been linked to irritating trichlorobenzene, a solvent-like carrier for PCBs.

Still, PCBs can inflate the potency of dangerous chemical compounds like the tobacco insecticide Parathion, said Robert Hoffman, who teaches technology assessment at N.C. State University.

A manual compiled by Carolina Power & Light Co. recommends that PCB-exposed workers wear safety glasses, coveralls, shoe-coverings and non-porous gloves.

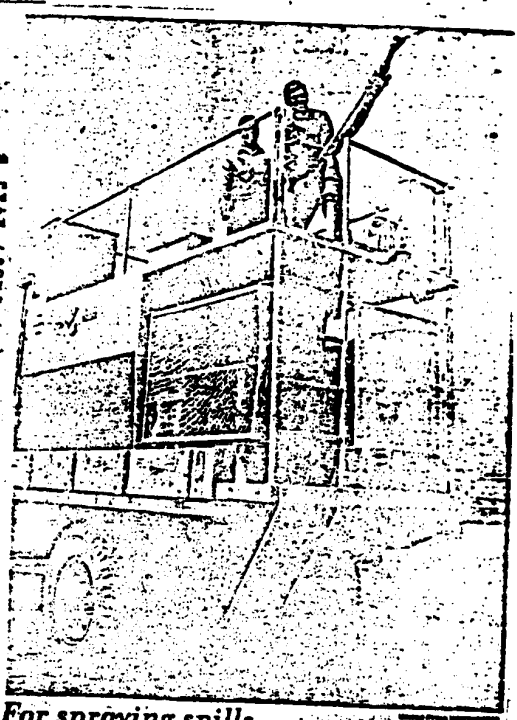
In other developments:

☐ The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was taking aerial photographs of affected areas Thursday, using infrared cameras to look for discolored soil and withered vegetation.

☐ Transportation Department signs warning people to avoid walking on contaminated shoulders were being prepared. Some counties, including Chatham, have already erected their own warnings.

☐ The Highway Patrol was planning to put extra cars on the roads at night to watch for suspicious tankers.

☐ Hunt doubled a reward for information leading to the arrest of "environmental vandals" responsible for the spills.



For spraying spills

A hyde-seader machine such as the one pictured here will be used to spray a charcoal solution on PCB spills around the state. However, the nozzle demonstrated here by Department of Transportation workers M.C. Campbell, left, and Lee Coulder will be relocated to the bottom rear of the truck.

PCB contaminants to be hauled away

By RICE NICHOLS

Thousands of truckloads of PCB-contaminated soil along more than 250 miles of North Carolina highways will be scraped up and hauled off to isolated landfills at a cost of up to $2.5 million, Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. announced Thursday.

He said the job, a potentially hazardous one for Transportation Department workers, probably will start early next month after absorbent charcoal and a sticky asphalt solution are sprayed on the toxic chemicals to bind them.

"I guarantee you, we'll try to get back every penny," the governor said, declaring that civil suits would be pressed against a night-riding trucker suspected of dumping the chemicals and still being sought in the case.

Hunt, who was vacationing when toxic PCBs were confirmed along roadsides Aug. 4, defended state government's hesitant first reaction to the spills as adequate.

"Nobody thought anyone would do so dastardly an act," he said at his weekly press conference.

PCBs accidentally contaminated tens of chicken feed in Wilmington in 1971, but no state has experienced such a widespread case of deliberate chemical dumping on soil, said U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials in Atlanta.

An estimated 32,500 tons of dirt and grass soaked to a depth of three inches with poisonous PCB transformer oil — a discontinued Monsanto Co. brand called Aroclor — will have to be scraped away by motor graders.

It will be hauled to one or more of a dozen clay-underlined sites, including an N.C. State University research farm, prison land, forestry buildings and old highway commission property.

Locations have not been disclosed.

Highway officials were hastily modifying seeding equipment and taking emergency blends charcoal from companies in Virginia, Delaware and Pennsylvania in an effort to start roadside spraying by Monday.

Several scientists, including the chief of the chemistry section of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences near Raleigh, were leary that the charcoal spraying treatment would dramatically confine the PCBs in place.

"But it may be worth the gamble," said Dr. James D. McKinney of the institute.

While state chemists and environmental officials have worked overtime to identify chemical "fingerprints" and piece together a clean-up strategy, Hunt's directives Thursday were

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