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Monsanto Lists Plans To End PCB Production

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ST. LOUIS (AP) — Monsanto Co. has announced it intends to phase out the production of chemical polychlorinated biphenyls PCBs, which have been termed a significant health hazard by the Environmental Protection Agency.

In making the announcement Monday, F. J. Fitzgerald, managing director of Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co., said it was too early to put an exact timetable on the phaseout but that it would take place in "a planned and orderly manner."

PCBs, the fire-resistant chemicals used mainly as insulating fluids in electrical equipment such as high-power transformers, have been shown to cause reproductive failures, gastric disorders and skin lesions in mammals.

Russell E. Train, the EPA administrator, said last month that PCBs should be effectively controlled "with every means at our disposal."

Monsanto is the only American manufacturer of PCBs, producing about 40 million annually at its Sauget, Ill., plant on the Mississippi River. The agency has listed 37 other plants where the chemical is used in the manufacture of transformers or capacitors.

According to Fitzgerald, Monsanto will voluntarily shut down its PCB manufacturing unit "as soon as we are satisfied that the electrical power supply industries" needs for usable, acceptable alternate dialectric fluids have been met..."

He noted that Monsanto began reducing production before a federal task force study on PCBs was completed in 1972.

Since then, he said, Monsanto has installed special high-temperature incinerators which completely destroy waste PCBs by burning them at extremely high temperatures.

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