

Oakland, CA
(Alameda Co.)
Tribune
(Cir. D. 176,563)
(Cir. S. 204,118)

OCT 20 1981

Allen's P. C. B Est. 1888

Tests start on turning PCBs into table salt

PHILADELPHIA (UPI) — Researchers next week will begin testing a new method for turning toxic industrial chemicals called PCBs into reusable oil and ordinary table salt.

The method was developed recently at Franklin Institute Research Laboratory of Philadelphia. It involves the mixing of modified sodium salts of polyethylene glycol (NaPEG) with PCBs — polychlorinated biphenyls used between 1929 and 1978 primarily in the manufacture of electrical transformers and capacitors.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency has given the institute permission to start testing the method beginning Oct. 26, said Dr. Steve Osborn, technical manager for the institute's program.

If the process is successfully demonstrated and approved, it will eliminate the need to transport PCBs to sites for burning or burial. It would also make it possible to treat

chemical spills directly on the ground, Osborn said.

The EPA in 1978 banned further manufacture of PCBs — which have also been used in carbonless carbon paper, hydraulic pumps, caulking compounds, inks, paints and insect sprays — because they were suspected of causing cancer and birth defects.

The NaPEG is stirred into the PCBs and heated to slightly above the boiling point for water, Osborn said. The sodium then strips the chlorine away from the PCBs, leaving sodium chloride — ordinary table salt.

The testing process will take about a month, he said, beginning with tests on oil with small concentrations of PCBs.

The tests, which have also been approved by the city of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, will be done on PCBs at a Philadelphia Electric Co. maintenance shop.