U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Donald A. Berreth/301-443-3285
(Home Phone: 301-869-1798)

HEW NEWS

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Comprehensive regulations designed to limit human exposure to PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls) from foods were proposed today by the Food and Drug Administration.

In announcing the proposed regulations, Charles C. Edwards, M.D., Commissioner of Food and Drugs, pointed out that although it is not possible for FDA to remove PCB's from the environment, the Agency can and is taking all steps within its authority to limit exposure from foods.

"We do not believe that current food levels present a hazard to public health, " said Dr. Edwards. "We do believe, however, that the sources of PCB's in foods can and should be significantly reduced to prevent any potential hazard from developing."

FDA's proposal would deal with known problem areas by:

1. Eliminating all sources of direct, accidental PCB contamination during the handling, processing and storage of feed, food and packaging material.
2. Prohibiting from the recycling process, deliberate or avoidable inclusion of pulp that contains any poisonous or deleterious substances which might migrate to food.
3. Setting temporary tolerances for a sufficient period of time for unavoidable PCB residues in food packaging materials and

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certain foods. Such tolerances are being set because it is not possible at this time to totally eliminate PCB's caused by environmental or industrial contamination.

PCB's have been produced since 1929 and have had a wide range of uses. The substances have or are being used as heat exchange liquids, as dielectrics, in lubricants -- and hydraulic fluids, and as ingredients in paints, plastics, resins, inks, waxes, adhesives, rubber, asphalt and various building materials. This widespread usage, combined with the highly stable and persistent qualities of the substances, have resulted in the occasional appearance of PCB's in the food supply.

FDA's investigation into the incidence of PCB's in foods has shown:

-- Except for avoidable industrial accidents and practices, PCB contamination of animal feeds is not a significant problem.

-- PCB's were found in 67% of food packaging tested by FDA. They were found in both recycled paper and virgin stock. However, only 19% of the foods in these packages contained PCB's, with an average concentration of 0.1 parts per million. Subsequent surveys show a continuing and substantial reduction of PCB's in packaging material.

-- Investigations show the presence of PCB residues in fresh water fish and in some food animals. The source of these residues is attributed in part to environmental contamination, such as discharges of PCB waste effluents into water and air.

Although additional research is needed to determine the effects of low level human exposure to PCB's over a long period of time, today's FDA action is being taken as a precautionary measure to eliminate any unnecessary exposure.

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FDA is coordinating its efforts with an interdepartmental task force on PCB's established last September to bring together the combined resources and authorities of affected governmental agencies.

"FDA investigations and the work of the PCB interdepartmental task force support these proposed regulations," said Dr. Edwards.

"The regulations are realistic and will adequately protect the public health from the potential dangers of PCB's."

FDA's proposal will be published in the March 10, 1972 FEDERAL REGISTER. Interested persons have 60 days to comment on the proposal by writing to the Hearing Clerk, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Room 6-88, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

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