

Monsanto

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FROM

(NAME-LOCATION-PHONE) Gary F. Barton - A2SP - 694-7233

DATE: October 19, 1994

cc: Diane Herndon - A2SP
Robert Kaley - A2NE

SUBJ: **Sierra Magazine Response -- PCBs**

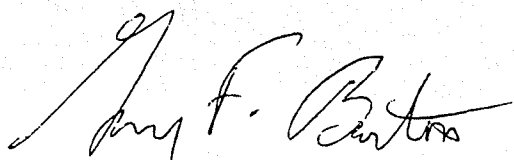
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TO: L. J. O'Neill - G4WA
L. W. Wassell - G4WF

Attached is a copy of the Monsanto letter sent to the editor of Sierra Magazine in response to the article "Pandora's Poison" (Sept./Oct. 1994). The letter is signed by M. Pierle. The Nov./Dec. 1994 issue of Sierra is already printed. We hope to generate some response in the next issue (Jan./Feb. 1995) which will be out in mid-December.

Also attached is a copy of the letter sent to Sierra by General Electric in response to the same article.

Please feel free to distribute the Monsanto letter within The Chemical Group as an "official" response to the PCB issues raised in the article.


Gary F. Barton

Attachments
/gfb

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Monsanto

MICHAEL A. PIERLE
Vice President

Monsanto Company
800 N. Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri 63167
Phone: (314) 694-8882

October 11, 1994

Mr. Jonathan F. King
Editor-in-Chief
Sierra
730 Pope Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

Dear Mr. King:

"Pandora's Poison" (article appearing in Sept./Oct. 1994) includes a series of misleading and inaccurate accusations which leave readers with a false view of both the science of PCBs and Monsanto's actions.

Monsanto acted responsibly in the manufacture of PCBs, and in the eventual phase-out of the product once evidence about the material's persistence in the environment was confirmed. In 1970, Monsanto widely communicated the newly recognized environmental concern and launched an immediate voluntary phase out of all sales of PCB products for "open applications" that could lead to uncontrolled environmental release.

By 1972, Monsanto had limited PCB sales to some two dozen customers principally for use in enclosed electrical equipment. These remaining customers were thoroughly informed about their responsibilities in handling PCBs to prevent environmental release, contrary to assertions in the article.

Monsanto considered halting production of PCBs in the early 1970s, but no PCB substitutes were commercially available for fire-resistant dielectric fluid. This dilemma was recognized by the Federal Interdepartmental Task Force on PCBs, which concluded in 1972 that the need for "continued use for transformers and capacitors in the near future is considered necessary because of the significantly increased risk of fire and explosion and the disruption of electrical service which would result from a ban on PCB use." The need for continued production was again emphasized in 1975 by Russell Train, administrator of the U.S. EPA, who cautioned that massive power disruptions would occur if Monsanto were to cease production before suitable replacement fluids became available.

Following electrical industry assurances that replacement products were at hand, Monsanto voluntarily totally ceased production and sales of PCBs in 1977.

Allegations in the article that Monsanto knew about adverse health effects from exposure to PCBs since the 1930s and covered up the information are not true. Monsanto has never concealed any hazard of PCBs. The animal tests and other data referred to in the article were publicly known for decades and were considered in establishing handling guidelines for PCBs. Furthermore, the original Drinker study, referenced in the article, was in fact published by the Harvard School of Public Health following its open presentation at a

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meeting attended by government representatives. Dr. Drinker himself said in 1937 that PCBs are safe and "operations employing them can easily be safeguarded." Dr. Drinker conducted further studies and determined that the chemical which he originally believed to be causing liver effects in animals was not PCBs, but rather another chemical. In 1939, Dr. Drinker publicly stated that the PCB product he tested was only mildly toxic if inhaled over long periods of time.

The Sierra article claims that Monsanto falsified cancer research related to PCBs. This again is absolutely wrong. The actual interim study reports and tissue slides from the studies of Monsanto products, conducted by a then nationally recognized independent laboratory, were turned over to the government. The government has never challenged these PCB studies or indicated that Monsanto had done anything wrong.

The article includes numerous misrepresentations of scientific and medical knowledge. Dioxins are not present in or caused by the burning of PCB. Similarly, it is false to state that former PCB workers are dying at a higher-than-average cancer rate since the opposite is true -- they have an overall lower cancer rate.

Following years of study into possible links between PCBs and human health, Dr. Renate Kimbrough, formerly of the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. EPA, stated:

"When humans were exposed only to PCBs the only observed acute effects have generally been minor. So far, no significant chronic health effects have been causally associated with exposure to PCBs."

Monsanto and others in the chemical industry are working hard to earn the public's trust, not with words, but through solid measurable results. Monsanto reduced its air emissions of toxic chemicals worldwide between 1987 and the end of 1992 by 90 percent. Among other advances, our scientists have developed new manufacturing processes to eliminate the need for certain toxic materials and are testing better remediation techniques that are less disruptive to surface ecosystems.

Claims of "cover-ups" and "sacrificing 'life itself' to corporate profits" are untrue and out of touch with the reality of Monsanto's way of doing business.

Sincerely,



M. A. Pierle
Vice President, Environment,
Safety and Health

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GE

To the Editor
Sierra Magazine

The article, "Pandora's Poison" (September/October 1994) is an unfortunate example of an advocate ignoring facts in an attempt to further his preconceived and unfounded theories. The article's claim of a 50-year conspiracy to keep information about PCBs from virtually everyone defies the reality of a long, public record of scientific investigation and communication.

Building on this false foundation, the article accuses GE of not sharing information about PCBs promptly with its employees and customers. This, too, is incorrect and maligns the integrity of thousands of GE people. Among the inaccurate and misleading statements in the article are these:

- Dr. Drinker's 1937 research is used as the starting point for the "conspiracy." The author implies that Drinker's research was done in secret. In reality, this research was openly presented at the Harvard School of Public Health at a meeting attended by Government representatives. Unreported is Dr. Drinker's later research that exonerated PCBs from causing health effects in the workers he had studied.
- In quoting a GE executive from the published minutes of the 1937 meeting (attempting to suggest the company knew then of adverse health effects of PCBs), the author replaced the word "it" with "[the PCB]" when, in fact, "it" referred to a totally different substance called Halowax, whose effects were controlled through institution of industrial hygiene methods.
- In a sidebar, an ex-GE employee is said to have had "systematic PCB poisoning," a claim unsupported by the employee's treating doctor who found the self-diagnosed "chloracne" condition to have been a staph infection.

PCBs have been one of the most heavily scrutinized chemicals over the last two decades. None of the human epidemiological studies – including a number involving GE workers – establish any significant link between exposure to PCBs and serious illness or increased incidence of cancer.

GE acknowledges that there are issues regarding PCBs upon which reasonable minds may differ, but we maintain that our opinions are based on long occupational experience and the large body of public scientific literature – the same literature that "Pandora's Poison" claims that GE somehow suppressed and the author ignored.

Balanced, accurate information about the environment is what your readers deserve. "Pandora's Poison" does not provide it.

s/Steve Ramsey

VP, ESH

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