

Ban on coolant chemical to be sought in Oregon

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — State Rep. Roger Martin, R-Lake Oswego, said today he would introduce legislation in Oregon to ban the use of PCB, a toxic chemical used as a coolant. PCB stands for polychlorinated biphenyl, a chemical produced in

the United States since 1929.

Martin, owner of an electrical supply store, said a primary use of PCB is as a coolant for transformers and capacitors; as lubricants; containers for pesticides; waterproofing chemicals and on carbonless duplicating paper.

The chemical does not break down in the environment. He said PCB has been linked to cancer and abortions in experimental animals.

Martin said Russell Train, director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has warned against the use of PCB, but he said the EPA has no power to ban it. In a news conference, Martin held up a jar of the brownish PCB liquid.

The chemical has a high burning point and is used near flammable materials. When it is burned, PCB is broken up but not destroyed and produces chlorine gas, Martin said.

Cereal manufacturers have stopped using wax paper containing PCB, Martin said.

He said he could not document any harmful effects in Oregon, but "We know there is a buildup in the Columbia River."

Martin said he would introduce the bill at the next regular legislative session, or in a special session if one is held, at the request of the Oregon Electric Club, an organization of suppliers, utility employees and others involved with the electrical industry.

His bill, Martin said, would stipulate how PCB could be stored.

He said there is a disposal site at an abandoned missile silo in Idaho where PCB is stored in heavy concrete vaults.

"Research indicates that in increasing concentrations, they have an effect on fish life and wildlife, especially ocean feeding birds, and that the buildup in the systems of this wildlife has very similar effects to the buildup of DDT," Martin said.

"In addition, there is medical indication that concentrations of PCBs in humans may lead to a wide range of harmful effects," Martin said.

"In 1968 in Japan," he said, "over 1,000 people suffered an epidemic of disfiguring skin disease, which was traced to a buildup of contaminated rice oil they were using."

"The Japanese suffered from abdominal pains and disturbances in the liver function."

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