The Standard-Times
NEW BEDFORD, MASS.
D. 49,808 SUN. 71,254

AUG 21 1976

Aerovox warns of layoffs if EPA enforces PCB rule

FILE ONE

By JOHN CONLOW
Ottaway News Service

WASHINGTON — A New Bedford firm has told the Environmental Protection Agency that it will be forced to lay off 500 employes if the agency goes ahead with a proposal to restrict the use of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs).

Aerovox Industries, Inc., President Clifford H. Tuttle said his company, which manufactures oil capacitors, could not possibly phase out the use of PCBs prior to July 1, 1978.

EPA Friday began preliminary hearings on regulations that would restrict the discharge of the highly toxic chemical into navigable waters.

PCBs, known for their heat-resistant qualities, are commonly used in electrical equipment and the manufacture of carbonless copy paper, paint, lubricants and some types of paper.

The chemical has been found to cause cancer, reproductive problems and chronic disorders in test animals and is thought to have similar effects on humans.

EPA estimates that 10 million pounds of the lethal chemical are seeping into the environment each year through direct discharges into waterways and through landfills that contain discarded PCB products.

Tuttle noted in a letter to EPA that the sole U.S. manufacturer of PCBs, the Monsanto Co., has promised to phase out the chemical by the end of 1978.

He also said that currently there is no known substitute for PCBs, which are also known by the trade name Aroclor.

"If this standard is published as it currently exists and the effective date is any sooner than late 1978," Tuttle told EPA, "Aerovox will have no choice but to close its doors and lay off 500 employes, as fully 90 per cent of our current production is dependent on Aroclor."

However, in a surprise move, the Dow Chemical Co. challenged Tuttle's assumption that no substitute exists for PCBs, and announced it is currently marketing a replacement.

"We object to an important assumption that a satisfactory PCB substitute is not available," a Dow official said.

"Dow Chemical Co. is currently marketing a substitute which has been found environmentally acceptable and able to perform equal to or better than capacitor grade PCB," he said.

The proposed rules would not ban the use of PCBs completely, but only restrict their discharge into navigable waters to one part PCBs to a billion parts water.

MONS 037310