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EPA acts on PCB pollution

CHICAGO (AP) — The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has taken its first action to control the discharge of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) with the citation of a Waukegan outboard motor plant.

The agency Thursday informed Johnson Outboards that the firm had been allowing as much as 2,000 times the permissable level of PCBs to flow into Lake Michigan from some of its drainage spouts.

The heat-resistant PCBs have been used as machine lubricants and in electrical capacitors, as well as in the manufacture or processing of plastics, paper products and certain types of steel. Recent research has shown that the nearly indestructible chemicals can cause liver cancer and miscarriages in laboratory animals.

Because of the increasing incidence of PCB residues in Great Lakes commercial and game fish, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has been trying to halt the sale of fish with more than 5 parts per million (ppm) of PCB. The Canadian government already has lowered its permissible limit in fish to 2 ppm.

The state EPA said PCB concentrations of up to 11,000 ppm were found last year in discharges from seven drainage spouts at the Johnson plant.

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