NEW YORK ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY SEEKS
$7 BILLION PENALTY FOR G ERAL ELECTRIC

ALBANY (AP)- A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF $7 BILLION SHOULD BE IMPOSED ON THE G ERAL ELECTRIC CO FOR DUMPING THE HUDSON RIVER WITH THE TOXIC CHEMICAL KNOWN AS PCBS, THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION SAID.

IN ITS LATEST STEP IN AN EIGHT-MONTH-OLD ACTION AGAINST GE, THE DEPARTMENT ASKED FOR THE MAXIMUM PENALTY, ARGUING THAT AN IMPORTANT NATURAL RESOURCE HAS BEEN DEGRADED BY GE.

GE SHOULD ALSO BE REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM FOR THE REMOVAL OF PCB-CONTAMINATED SEDIMENTS IN THE HUDSON RIVER BED, OR PAY THE COST OF IMPLEMENTING SUCH A PROGRAM, THE DEPARTMENT SAID.

THE DEPARTMENT FILED ITS DEMANDS WITH ABRAHAM SOFAER, THE HEARING OFFICER IN THE STATE'S CASE AGAINST GE.

IN AN INTERIM OPINION EARLIER THIS YEAR SOFAER RULED THAT GE HAD VIOLATED THE STATE'S WATER QUALITY STANDARDS WITH ITS DUMPING OF POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS FROM TWO HUDSON RIVER PLANTS.

BOTH THE STATE AND GE CAN SUBMIT ADDITIONAL BRIEFS BEFORE HE ISSUES HIS FINAL OPINION WHICH IS EXPECTED SOMETIME IN JUNE.
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