PCB-Article

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Traces of PCB are found in human tissue

NEW YORK -- An industrial chemical, PCB, manufactured in this country only by Monsanto Co., has been found in samples of human tissue taken in 18 states including Illinois, according to a recent government survey.

A report of the Division of Pesticide Community Studies of the Environmental Protection agency listed the findings. It was presented at a meeting of the American Chemical Society.

"These materials are widely found in the population," the report said. "Positive samples came from every hospital, city and state sampled."

It did not discuss the question of possible harm to humans at the low levels detected. PCB toxicity considerations will be discussed later in the meeting.

In laboratory tests, PCB reportedly has caused skin ailments and liver and birth defects in animals. PCB is not a pesticide but is similar to DDT.

The initials PCB come from the chemical name polychlorinated biphenyl. It is intended for use only in systems designed to prevent it from escaping into the environment. It is a component in plastics, flame retardants, insulating fluids, paints and numerous other products.

Monsanto Co., has restricted the use of PCB to closed systems, but scientists noted the chemical was produced in other countries and the problem was global.

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