OHIO GROWER BROUGHT TO COURT BY EPA/DOJ FOR IMPROPER PCB DISPOSAL

An Ohio commercial tomato grower has been charged by the Justice Department with improperly disposing of waste oils and solvents containing polychlorinated biphenyls. At the request of the Environmental Protection Agency, DOJ filed a civil suit April 24 charging the company's owner, Alvin F. Laskin, with violations of the Toxic Substances Control Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the Clean Water Act.

The suit charges that Laskin's company has been regularly disposing of PCB waste oils by burning them to provide heat to grow tomatoes in the winter and by employing them in road-oiling operations. Laskin's company has allegedly been obtaining, storing and then disposing of the oils since 1966.

EPA and Ohio officials have verified that Laskin's waste oils contained PCBs in excess of Federal standards, and despite warnings of the presence of PCB, the Laskin Greenhouse and Waste Oil Company has burned 200,000 gallons a year and spread 600,000 gallons a year of waste oil on roads, the suit said.

DOJ and EPA are asking the U.S. District Court, Cleveland, Ohio to issue injunctions requiring the company to test for PCBs and to cease storage and disposal of PCB mixtures that exceed Federal standards. The agencies are also seeking civil penalties of $10,000 a day for each illegal discharge of PCB-oil since October 23, 1972.

DOJ's James Moorman said the suit is the second to be filed under TSCA and is part of the agencies' announced efforts to step up enforcement actions for hazardous waste disposal problems.

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