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EPA Outlines Process For Destruction of PCBs

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON—The Environmental Protection Agency recommended a complex burning process as the best way to destroy industrial wastes containing polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs.

The agency made the suggestion to industrial users of PCBs, which are most commonly used as insulators for transformers and capacitors in electrical equipment. PCBs, a chemical family derived from benzene, are known to cause severe human ailments such as skin disease and liver problems, and laboratory tests with monkeys have shown a high incidence of reproductive failure.

EPA officials said that PCB wastes must be burned in a special incinerator at prescribed temperatures and oxygen levels and that a scrubber must be installed to trap pollutants that could be released into the air.

Last December the agency asked industrial users to voluntarily cut back on PCBs but didn't ban their use. Adequate substitutes don't yet exist, EPA Administrator Russel Train said. At that time, Mr. Train said he would work with industry to develop a safe method of disposing of the PCB-contaminated wastes. The EPA recommendations are only advisory.

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