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Monsanto Defends, Describes Use Of Its Polychlorinated Biphenyls

ST LOUIS — Monsanto Co, sole domestic producer of an industrial chemical called polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), said at weekend that recent political charges and sensational headlines about the chemical causing "a major ecological crisis" completely ignore voluntary actions the company has taken to restrict use of the material.

"Our program began back in 1968 with the proper identification and measurement of PCB in the environment and will conclude this year by our unilateral action to restrict its use," Howard L. Minckler, company vice president and general manager of its organic chemicals division, said.

He added that Monsanto had not been pressured into action by any legislation or organized group.

Commenting on recent report that PCB can induce birth defects in animals, Minckler said, "Monsanto is not aware of any scientific data that indicates polychlorinated biphenyls may cause birth defects.

"What should be emphasized," Minckler continued, "is that PCB was developed over 40 years ago primarily for use as a coolant in electrical transformers and capacitors.

"Anyone who lives in a large city is familiar with power failures. During periods of peak power needs, air-conditioning and refrigeration fail, lights go out and commuters are stranded. If power companies were to remove PCB from equipment, we have been told that major blackouts would occur throughout the world.

"PCB is used in electrical equipment as a safety fluid....At the moment, there are no substitutes available which equal the safety performance of PCB."