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FOR RELEASE A.M.'S SUNDAY, MAY 22, 1977

EPA PROPOSED REGULATIONS FOR LABELING, DISPOSAL OF PCBS

Acting under authority of the new Toxic Substances Control Act, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Douglas M. Costle today proposed a regulation for the labeling and disposal of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and for products containing PCBs.

"PCBs were first manufactured in 1931," Costle said. "Only in the last decade have we discovered that this chemical is extremely persistent. PCBs have accumulated in the food chain, threatening fishing in the Great Lakes and in the Hudson River. Recently PCBs were found in samples of mother's milk. Evidence indicates that PCBs can cause skin reactions and can harm the body's immunilogical defense system. PCBs are also suspected of harming the reproductive system and may cause cancer."

"Until passage of the Toxic Substances Control Act late last year, EPA had no authority for regulating use and disposal of PCBs. This regulation provides for safe disposal, notably destruction through high temperature incineration, of all accessible PCBs," Costle said.

"This proposed regulation is the first of several steps that EPA will take under that Act to limit PCBs as a threat to human health and the environment."

(more)

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EPA FORM 1510-1 (REV. 6-72)

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The regulation calls for high temperature incineration for all liquid PCBs, such as Askarels drained from transformers and solvents contaminated with PCBs. Articles containing PCBs such as electrical capacitors, which are widely used in the electrical industry and in some small appliances, also are to be incinerated.

In order to provide disposal alternatives until more high temperature incinerators come into service, most of these PCB articles can be disposed of in chemical waste landfills for the first two years following issuance of the regulation in final form. In addition PCBs may be stored temporarily, prior to disposal. Storage may be used to help balance the flow of waste PCBs to ultimate disposal.

The proposed regulation contains criteria for the design and operation of high temperature incinerators and chemical waste landfills, as well as an EPA approval procedure for such facilities.

The proposed regulation also requires special warning and informational markings on all new products containing PCBs. High risk items such as containers of PCBs and disposal storage areas must be labeled six months after the rule becomes effective. Because of their wide distribution, electrical transformers and large high voltage capacitors used mainly in the electric utilities industry are given 12 months after promulgation to be labeled.

The proposed regulation also requires that records be kept to account for PCBs as they move through the process of storage and disposal.

The regulation applies to all persons who manufacture, process, distribute in commerce, use, or dispose of PCBs. Agencies of government at the local, State, and Federal level are included.

"While we are confident that this regulation will be effective in managing and destroying concentrated sources of PCBs," Costle said, "we face a different and extremely difficult problem in determining how to deal with the 250 million pounds of PCBs -- or one-third of that in service -- which are found in 895 million individual capacitor units widely distributed across the country."

"These PCBs are found in almost every fluorescent light fixture and in many small appliances. A regulatory requirement alone is not likely to be very effective in ensuring that they are collected and transported to an incinerator for destruction. But if the assistance of the public is not achieved, these PCBs will probably find their way into the local dump or landfill and from there into the environment. EPA is seeking ideas and assistance on ways to address this complex problem."

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"The major impact of the proposed regulation," Costle said, "will be on owners and users of currently operating PCB capacitors and transformers who will fact increased costs due to the required special labeling, disposal, and recordkeeping."

Capital costs associated with compliance are expected to total $9.1 million, including $5 million for new incineration capacity, $0.1 million for marking, and $4 million for storage facilities. Annual operating costs are expected to total $58.3 million in 1978 -- $5 million for chemical waste landfill charges, $8 million for disposal transportation, $8 million for recordkeeping, $33.3 million for marking, and $4 million for maintenance of storage facilities. Total operating costs will increase slightly in 1979 to $61 million. After 1979, operating costs should decrease approximately 7 percent each year.

Costle pointed out that the regulation should create small business opportunities and employment due to the development of collection and storage services for numerous small generators of PCB wastes.

Two public meetings were held during the development of the proposed regulation, and a detailed briefing was presented to representatives of various Federal agencies concerned with PCBs.

An informal hearing on the proposed regulation will be held starting June 20, at EPA, in Room 2117, Waterside Mall, 401 M Street, SW., Washington, D.C. 20460.

Written comments are requested by June 10, addressed to the EPA Office of Toxic Substances, Attention: Joni T. Repasch, (WH-557), 401 M Street, SW., Washington, D.C. 20460.

The proposed regulation will be published soon in the Federal Register.

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