JUN 15 1981

File - PCB Misc

Note to Editors from Monsanto Company September 26, 1980

PCB HAZARDS -- FACTS & FALLACIES

Monsanto made polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) until 1977, primarily as fire-resistant insulating fluids for electrical power-supply functions in transformers and capacitors. For more than 40 years their use was required in most high-rise buildings, schools and hospitals, where the risks of fire or explosion were major concerns.

Unfortunately, the very properties that made PCBs ideal for these uses, proved in the early 1970s to be creating environmental problems. PCBs are highly stable compounds that do not readily break down in the environment. Consequently, used PCB material remains intact in the ground and water for many years. Also, PCBs build up (or bioaccumulate) in the fatty tissue of lower forms of animal and aquatic life that consume them -- eventually reaching highly toxic levels in these life forms.

However, the hazards of PCBs to humans have been greatly exaggerated. PCBs are not human "cancer-causing agents" and they are not "deadly toxins." PCBs are considered only mildly toxic on an acute basis when ingested by humans -- about on the same order as common table salt.

There has never been a single documented case in this country where PCBs ever caused serious human health problems. From the many animal studies that have been

-more-

done with PCB compounds, however, it is clear that exposure should be avoided. These animal studies have consistently shown PCBs can cause skin irritation; and repeated, prolonged exposure can produce liver injury in test animals.

The "cancer-causing" label resulted from a single animal study conducted by a Public Health Service researcher in 1975 -- and later discredited by peer review. The cancer stigma has persisted, however, despite this and the results of a later animal study performed by the National Cancer Institute (1978). The conclusion of the NCI study was that PCBs were not cancer-causing compounds. (Copy of NCI news release attached).

This conclusion is further supported by the human experience. Monsanto is aware of seven studies done in the United States of groups of people exposed to PCBs. None of these studies found PCBs to cause cancer in humans.

In summary, there are enough real, legitimate concerns about potential environmental harm from PCBs without unnecessarily alarming the public with labels like "cancer-causing" and "deadly toxin."

-o0o-

For additional information contact: Dan R. Bishop, Director, Environmental Communications, Monsanto Company (314) 694-2891