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PCB imports rise sharply; Aspin asks ban

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.) said Sunday that with U.S. production of the toxic chemical PCB scheduled to end in 1977, imports of the substance have risen sharply — apparently in an effort to prolong its use.

Aspin said data from the Customs Bureau showed the United States imported 316,586 pounds of PCB during the first eight months of 1976. During all of 1975, only 276,450 pounds was imported.

Under the new Toxic Substances Act, all use of PCB in the United States must end by June 1, 1979. Aspin said the sole U.S. manufacturer, Monsanto Chemical Co., planned to end production by October, 1977.

"Unless imports are quickly ended," Aspin said in a statement issued by his office, "PCBs will continue to threaten the environment."

He said he will ask the Environmental Protection Agency to ban further PCB imports before the 1979 legal deadline.

An EPA spokesman said the agency has no present intention of speeding up the ban on PCB. He said Congress allowed the two-year delay to give industries time to obtain suitable replacements for PCB, and the agency still considered that a valid approach to the problem. He added that stockpiled PCB could not be used after the 1979 ban takes place.

PCB, a group of related chemicals called "polychlorinated biphenyls," is used in industrial and mechanical applications.

PCB has not been directly proven to harm human beings, but has been shown to cause serious illness in laboratory animals. It also was found by the EPA in samples of human mothers' milk, indicating that it is reaching and being absorbed by human beings.

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