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Monsanto quits PCB

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — The Monsanto Co. says by Oct. 31, 1977, it will stop production of polychlorinated biphenyl, a chemical used as an electric insulator, because of possible hazardous effects on humans.

The company said Tuesday the phasing out of production during the next year will give time for manufacturers to find substitute materials for PCB. Substitutes developed by the electrical industry are being tested, although they may not prove as effective in resisting fire as PCB.

The Environmental Protection Agency, which has called PCB a "significant hazard to human health and the environment," praised Monsanto's announcement Tuesday.

"The Monsanto decision is a significant step in dealing with the total problem of PCB contamination," said EPA Administrator Russell E. Train.

"Environmental contamination will continue to be a problem due to the millions of PCBs already in landfills, soils, river and lake sediments, in our air and water and in wildlife and human tissue. This contamination will be there for years — moving into life systems, including humans."

Traces of PCB have been found in every major waterway in the country.

Monsanto announced in January it would eventually stop production of PCB but at the time it set no timetable. PCBs have been used since about 1930 as fire-resistant fluids and electric insulation in capacitators and transformers.

Monsanto once made as much as 85 million pounds of PCB a year, but its production has dropped to about 27,000 pounds in recent years as fears about environmental damage mounted. The company said sales of PCB amount to less than half a per cent of its business.

Monsanto's American production of PCB has been handled at it's plant in Sauget, Ill., across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. The company said probably no employes will lose jobs because of the phasing out of PCB.

Monsanto also makes PCB at a plant in England, and production there also will be phased out, although no timetable has been set.

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