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Where are PCBs coming from? Polychlorinated biphenyls are widely used and recent findings show they are widespread throughout environment. All along, producers of PCBs and users have been cited as major sources of this highly toxic chemical. But is that true? Jim Smith of chemistry dept. at Univ. of Waterloo (Ontario,

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Canada) completed extensive investigation of oxy-chlorination of organic effluents. He was trying to find out just what potentially dangerous products could be produced by industries and municipalities who disinfect their effluents by adding chlorine. Under mild conditions, he found that organics such as biphenyl and naphthalene (probably found in both municipal and industrial effluents) could produce polychlorinated biphenyls resembling commercial types. Thus he concluded that PCBs can get into environment from sources other than direct use of commercial products. Smiths tells IR&D that this finding actually confirms earlier work by Bob Carlson of Univ. of Minnesota (Minneapolis). Smith's findings will appear in paper submitted to Water Research journal (Ottawa).....
.....Food & Drug Admin. considers potential of PCBs so dangerous it may lower permissable level of PCBs in fish. And, there is talk of even banning commercial fishing in Hudson River where fish have been found with high levels of PCB. But, are such efforts getting at source of such pollution. Findings of Smith and Carlson should get immediate attention from Environmental Protection Agency.

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