BECKLEY, W. VA.
POST-HERALD
D. 20,059

DEC 29 1978

Lubricant Ban Will Be Costly To Coal Industry

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — A ban on a carcinogenic lubricant widely used in mining machinery and electrical transformers could cost the coal and power industries nearly $50 million, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA ban — which goes into effect in February — will forbid the use of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), which has been used as a lubricant in mining equipment for some 40 years. The viscous fluid was used widely because it has a very high heat tolerance needed for use in the coal industry.

According to Robin Woods of the EPA's public information office, the ban will carry fines of up to $25,000 a day for noncompliance under the Toxic Substance Control Act. EPA officials said they expect the Mining Safety and Health Administration to assist with enforcement.

EPA officials said they discovered as early as 1972 that the substance was found to cause cancer and nerve damage in laboratory animals. In addition, there is no effective way to dispose of the substance.

The federal agency said it estimates that since Monsanto Co. first produced PCB in the early 1930s, more than 1.36 billion pounds of the toxic substance has been used by industry. At least 780 million pounds is still in use, and six million pounds has been incinerated, the only effective means of disposal. The rest has been dispersed into the environment.

"It's shown up everywhere from ice in the Arctic to mothers' milk in a dozen states," Ms. Wood said. "Industries used to dump old PCB in the waterways and it was dispersed in the air. It also made its way into the food chain. There's just no way to get rid of it."

PCB, which has been sold under the names Askarel and Pyronol, must be totally out of use in mining machinery by 1981 under proposed revisions in the law. Presently, coal companies are required to store the fluid in specially constructed drums. There are two disposal stations in the country — in Houston, Tex., and Bridgeport, N.J. Neither has been approved by the EPA.

Electrical transformers containing the substance may remain in use until the wear out, said EPA environmental engineer Hal Snyder. "They can stay up as long as they don't require maintenance because they are safe containers as long as people aren't working on them.

MONS 008880