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environmental news

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHAT PRICE FOR A PCB BAN?

What price is the public and industry willing to pay for the ban of PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls) from the environment?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is holding a public meeting on the implementation of the agency's proposed PCB ban which goes into effect January 1, 1978.

The meeting will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., July 19 at the Pick Congress Hotel, Chicago, Illinois. Persons wishing to make a presentation or submit written testimony should contact M. Sabella at (312) 353-2072.

The proposed ban provides that after January 1, 1978 PCBs may not be manufactured, processed, distributed in commerce or used in other than a totally enclosed manner.

The work group wants the public's opinion on the following questions: Is any type or level of exposure to PCBs 'insignificant'? If so, what is that type or level of exposure? How is it defined? How is it measured? Does 'totally enclosed manner' refer to exposure resulting from the manufacture of PCBs or of articles containing PCBs; e.g. escape of PCBs from the manufacturing process in facilities, or only to the ultimate end-use of PCBs in containers and articles.

It is possible that EPA might determine that any exposure to PCBs is 'significant', so that any activity with an exposure of PCBs may continue only if EPA approves. On the other hand, EPA could after listening to public and industrial concerns, rule that a certain level of exposure to PCBs is insignificant and exempt some 'insignificant' activities.

F. Y.I.
Act
Please handle with anyone involved in the proposed group
Paul

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In addition, EPA is concerned with major areas of PCB manufacture, processing, distribution and use in assessing the potential coverage and impact of the proposed ban.

Specific PCB uses include what to do about the PCB laden oil inside existing transformers.

The agency needs to know what is the 'useful life' of an transformer and what release of PCBs may be involved in routine maintenance.

The agency wants to hear from industry on how it can safely dispose of and control the PCB laden oil used in the fire resistant hydraulic fluid of mining equipment and in the transformers used in electric locomotives and transit cars.

The major issue involves the possible fire safety problem of using substitute materials and the potential disruption of travel and railroad operations if inadequate time is provided to switch to another type of material.

PCBs are a class of organic compounds manufactured by the chlorination of biphenyl with anhydrous chlorine using iron fillings or ferric chloride as a catalyst.

PCBs are lipid soluble and can be absorbed into an organism's fatty tissue and the liver. Once ingested PCBs are retained by most organisms.

PCBs are dangerous to humans because contamination can cause certain types of cancer.

In particular, breast fed infants are susceptible to PCB contamination because human fat tissue is the storage area in the human body for the toxic chemical.

In a study released by EPA in September, 1976, detectable levels of PCBs were found in 65 of 67 samples of mother's milk. The average level was about 1.7 parts per million in the fat of the mother's milk.

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