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Monsanto Will Phase Out PCB's

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — Monsanto Co. announced Tuesday it will cease production of polychlorinated biphenyls, PCB's, at the end of October, 1977, and end all sales of PCB's when inventories are depleted.

The synthetic compounds have become feared pollutants, largely for the same lasting properties which make them valuable to industry.

Monsanto has been the principal supplier of PCB's, industrial chemicals used as insulators and fire retardants in electrical transformers. Earle Harbison Jr., general manager of the specialty chemicals division, said they were developed commercially in 1929 in response to needs for improved insulation and fire retardation. PCB-filled transformers are used in indoor installations including high-rises, hospitals, schools and other large buildings.

But Harbison adds that one property which makes the chemicals valuable — resistance to biodegradation — also causes accumulation of PCB's in the environment. Harbison said the firm has withdrawn them from several non-electrical uses in the past few years, as a result of preliminary data indicating a potential hazard to the environment.

He said the company would have ended production previously had the electrical industry been able to convert its own equipment more quickly.