Monsanto

FROM (NAME - LOCATION - PHONE): D. R. Bishop - A3NB

DATE : October 3, 1980

SUBJECT : PCBs

REFERENCE :

cc: Mr. P. P. Fried - 1650
BC: Mr. J. F. Hussey - 1920
Mr. J. E. McKee - A3NB
Mr. J. T. Nolan - D1A

TO : OpUnit PR Directors

F.Y.I. we circulated the attached, widely, last week to local news media contacts in an all-out attempt to get them off the "cancer-causing"/"deadly toxin" kick. And, I'm happy to report, with guarded optimism, that we're making some headway.

Last night on Channel 4, Julius Hunter referred to PCBs as "potentially toxic!" Since this is likely to be a continuing battle, in which I welcome your help when appropriate, I've enclosed this copy for your use.

Thanks.

Dan R. Bishop

/ec

Attachment

MONS 003860

IN - 10 (REV 8 77)

Note to Editors from Monsanto Company September 23, 1980

PCB HAZARDS -- FACTS & FALLACIES

In the decade of the 70's, Polychlorianted Biphenyls (PCBs) were frequently singled out by federal agencies, legislators, private interest groups and the news media as the symbolic example of why tough new toxic substance control regulations were needed in the United States. In the process, the hazards of PCBs were greatly exaggerated. Adjectives like "deadly toxins" and "potent cancer-causing agents" were and still are typically used to describe PCBs in government handouts and news stories.

This fact sheet is in no way intended to minimize the very real and acknowledged environmental concerns associated with irresponsible disposal of waste compounds containing PCBs, but rather to set the record straight on the human health hazards. PCBs are not human "cancer-causing agents" and they are not "deadly toxins." As a matter of fact, PCBs are considered only mildly toxic on an acute basis when ingested by humans -- about on the same order as common table salt.

The main problems with PCBs are environmental in scope. They remain intact in the land and the water for many years, resisting decomposition into innocuous compounds. At the same time, PCBs buildup (or bioaccumulate) in the fatty tissue of lower forms of animal and aquatic life that consume them -- eventually reaching highly toxic levels in these life forms.

-more-

There has never been a single documented case in this country where PCBs ever caused serious human health problems. From our knowledge of the many animal studies that have been done with PCB compounds, however, it is clear that exposure should be avoided. These animal studies have consistently shown that PCBs can cause skin irritation; and repeated, prolonged exposure can produce liver injury in test animals.

The "cancer-causing" label resulted from a single animal study conducted by a Public Health Service researcher in 1975 -- and later discredited by peer review. The cancer stigma has persisted, however, despite this and the results of a later animal study performed by the National Cancer Institute (1978). The conclusion of the NCI study was that PCBs were not cancer-causing compounds. (Copy of NCI news release attached).

This conclusion is further supported by the human experience. Monsanto is aware of seven studies done in the U.S. of groups of people exposed to PCBs. None of these studies found PCBs to cause cancer in humans.

In summary, there are enough real, legitimate concerns about potential environmental harm from PCBs without unnecessarily alarming the public with labels like "cancer-causing" and "deadly toxin."

-o0o-

For additional information contact: Dan R. Bishop, Director, Environmental Communications, Monsanto Company (314) 694-2891