

MONSANTO INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS CO.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
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PRELIMINARY INFORMATION
FROM ONGOING PCB STUDY
RELEASED BY MONSANTO

ST. LOUIS, Aug. 00 -- Monsanto Company today reported that it has found no cases of either malignant melanoma or pancreatic cancer among current or former employees engaged in the production of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at its U.S. manufacturing site.

This information, announced by George Roush, M.D., director of the company's medical and environmental health department, was released in response to questions from the news media, prompted by a recent Mobil Oil Corporation study which reported three cases of melanoma and two cases of pancreatic cancer developed among 72 employees who had been exposed to a PCB product while working at a Mobil plant in New Jersey.

At the same time, Monsanto announced that it will shut down its PCB manufacturing unit and withdraw from the market as a supplier of dielectric fluids to the electrical power supply industry by no later than September 30, 1977. This firm withdrawal date was announced by Earl H. Harbison, Jr., general manager of Monsanto's specialty chemicals division. Mr. Harbison said that the company will shut the unit down even sooner if the industry's conversion timetable permits.

"The electrical industry has told us that they will require another year to changeover to alternate products," Mr. Harbison said. Regarding the prospects of accelerating the timetable, Mr. Harbison said the answer would have to come from industry representatives. He also pointed out that based on current price levels, Monsanto will experience a half-million dollar after tax loss on its PCB business during the next 12 months.

Regarding the findings from the Monsanto worker study, Dr. Roush said that if either melanoma or pancreatic cancer were related to PCB exposure as the Mobil report suggested then it would follow that these malignancies would have also been seen in a worker population over four times as large. "The fact that we have found no cases of either of these cancers is a pretty strong indication that what Mobil found is not related to PCBs," he said.

The Monsanto information was based on a review of the clinical records of more than 300 employes and former employes who were identified as having worked in the PCB production unit of the company's William G. Krummrich plant, dating back to 1936 when the unit first became operational. The Krummrich plant, located just south of East St. Louis at Sauget, Ill., is the sole U.S. manufacturing site for Monsanto-produced PCB products. In addition to clinical records, the company also reviewed the death certificates of 50 former PCB workers. ~~that it has been able to locate.~~

Dr. Roush said that this information was extracted from an ongoing epidemiological study that will require another 12 to 18 months to complete. "We would not normally release clinical or medical data from a still-ongoing study," he continued, "without first subjecting it to full scientific investigation and review." He emphasized that, while some facts and conclusions have been reached, much additional work needs to be done before a final assessment can be made. He cautioned against interpreting raw information and said to do so could be misleading.

"With these qualifications, and because I am mindful of the obvious concern that has been generated by the Mobil report, I am releasing these early findings, some of which I must re-emphasize are very preliminary.

"Since the initial statistical tabulation revealed no cases of melanoma or pancreatic cancer, it was easy to extract this information and report it as fact, there being nothing further to investigate with respect to these specific abnormalities.

"Another easy conclusion reached from the simple statistical computation was the fact that these PCB workers lived longer than the national average.

"The statistical review also revealed that the mortality rate for lung cancer was higher than the national average. Further investigation of this finding has lead us to some conclusions while others remain to be made. Based on all the information available,

it would appear that the lung cancers were not caused by or related to PCB exposure. Indeed, this belief is also supported by an outside epidemiologist, retained by Monsanto to review the data. He reported that the preliminary study does not indicate dose-response relationships, (ie., PCB exposure) either for all causes of death or for lung cancer."

Dr. Roush said that based on the work done to date he has found nothing in the study of Monsanto's PCB workers, or for that matter in the company's long term feeding studies with rats, that would indicate a carcinogenic response from PCBs. "I can say with total assurance that if Monsanto thought PCBs were a carcinogen, the company would shut down production immediately, the electrical power supply industry's needs notwithstanding."

Commenting further on the preliminary findings, Dr. Roush said that seven cases of lung cancer were identified compared to two that would have been expected based on National Cancer Institute data for the nation as a whole. "At this point, we don't know what this means. We are still trying to determine what, if anything, it may be related to."

"For example, we hope to compare these findings with the lung cancer mortality rate for the East St. Louis area. This may tell us something. We also hope to determine the smoking habits of these workers and, if possible, their prior and post Monsanto work experience and exposure. There are a lot of things we still don't know, the answers to which could be extremely significant with a sample this small.

--5 MIC: PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FROM ONGOING PCB STUDY RELEASED
BY MONSANTO xxx small

"What we do know," he went on, "is that cigarette smoking is responsible for at least 80 per cent of all lung cancer and we also know that the mortality rate for cancer is higher in the metropolitan East St. Louis area than the national average.

The Monsanto official said that the study will be published and transmitted to appropriate Federal agencies upon completion.

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