

From the Desk of
Robert G. Kaley, II

March 11, 1999

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FYI - a selection of articles about the GE epidemiology study.

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March 11, 1999, Thursday, ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: NEWS;

Page A22

LENGTH: 320 words

HEADLINE: STUDY: NO LINK IN **PCBS**, CANCER DEATHS

BYLINE: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DATELINE: Albany

BODY:

Albany - The largest-ever study on human exposure to toxic **PCB** chemicals found no link between **PCBs** and deaths from cancer.

The study, conducted by researchers Renate Kimbrough and Martha Doemland at the Institute for Evaluating Health Risks, a Washington-based nonprofit research organization, focused on the effects of **PCBs** in more than 7,000 former employees of two General Electric plants near here.

GE used **PCBs**, or polychlorinated biphenyls, for nearly 50 years as insulation in electrical capacitors and transformers. GE, which faces potentially huge financial liability for cleanup of **PCBs** it dumped, financed the study.

According to Kimbrough, the workers exposed to **PCBs** had high levels of the chemical in their blood, but their rate of cancer deaths was lower than the national average. The researchers tracked the medical histories of the employees for an average of 31 years and compared causes of death over that time to national and regional averages.

While 353 workers died of cancer over the period of the study, a statistically similar sample of people would have had 400 deaths due to cancer.

"The findings of this study are consistent with a belief that cancer risks from exposure to **PCBs** have been overstated," Dr. John Moore, president of IEHR, said.

The study was published yesterday in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

The release of the study comes just five months after GE struck a deal with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to remove **PCB** contaminants from the Housatonic River in Connecticut and polluted areas of Pittsfield, Mass., at an estimated cost of \$150 million.

The company has also been in protracted negotiations with the EPA and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation over continued cleanup of the Hudson River, into which it legally dumped more than one million pounds of **PCBs** from the late 1940s to 1977.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: March 11, 1999

March 11, 1999; THURSDAY; ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. A06

LENGTH: 753 words

HEADLINE: GE SAYS STUDY FOUND NO LINK BETWEEN PCB EXPOSURE, CANCER

SOURCE: Wire services

BYLINE: MARCO LEAVITT, The Associated Press

DATELINE: ALBANY, N.Y.

BODY:

A biologist whose research more than 20 years ago found the first link between **PCBs** and liver cancer in laboratory rats has published a new study finding no evidence that work exposure to the chemicals causes cancer in humans.

The General Electric-funded study of more than 7,000 former employees of two GE plants appears in the March issue of The Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

"The bottom line is that we didn't find anything," said researcher Renate Kimbrough.

Kimbrough and Martha Doemland conducted the study, which is the largest ever to focus on human exposure, at the Institute for Evaluating Health Risks in Washington.

The study tracked the medical histories of employees for an average of 31 years and compared causes of deaths to national and regional averages.

To their surprise, researchers found that workers who were exposed to **PCBs** had a lower rate of cancer deaths than the national average, despite having high levels of the chemical in their blood, according to Kimbrough.

While 353 workers died of cancer over the period of the study, a statistically similar sample of people would have 400 deaths due to cancer. The employees had worked at two GE plants north of Albany.

Richard Caspe, the director of the EPA's superfund program, said the agency was still reviewing the study and didn't know how it would affect their negotiations with GE over cleanup of the Hudson River. The company legally dumped more than 1 million pounds of **PCBs** into the Hudson from the late 1940s to 1977.

Caspe pointed out that the study only concerned itself with death rates, and didn't take into account the health of survivors. He said that other studies have found that **PCBs** cause reduced birth weights in children and can disrupt a person's immune system. Studies have also found a link between **PCBs** and death rates, he said.

State Health Department officials said they were in the midst of reviewing the study and were unable to comment on it. The state has also been negotiating with GE over the cleanup of the Hudson.

The release of the study comes just five months after GE struck a deal with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to remove **PCB** contaminants from the Housatonic River and polluted areas of Pittsfield, Mass., at an estimated cost of \$150 million.

General Electric used **PCBs**, or **polychlorinated biphenyls**, for nearly 50 years as insulation in electrical capacitors and transformers.

Environmental advocacy groups questioned whether the report could be trusted, since it was paid for by GE, which faces potentially huge financial liability for cleanup of **PCBs**.

"What I think is important is the fact that this is GE's data and GE funded the report," said Kara Lee of Scenic Hudson, a conservation group in Poughkeepsie.

Kimbrough defended the report, saying it was compiled largely from government statistics and reviewed by a committee of independent scientists. Mortality rates can't be manipulated, she said.

"It's like counting beans," she said.

GE has already spent about \$165 million cleaning up pollution at its facilities in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls and in the Hudson River, GE spokesman Mark Behan said. He was unable to say how much the company paid to finance the study.

Based on scientific evidence linking **PCBs** to cancer in laboratory rats, EPA Administrator Carol Browner attacked GE last summer for dragging its feet on cleanup of the Hudson. She also said in testimony before the state Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee that GE was misleading people in the Hudson Valley by touting reports saying **PCBs** are safe.

It was Kimbrough's study done in 1975 when she worked for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta that first linked **PCBs** to liver cancer in laboratory rats. That led the government to label the chemicals a probable cause for cancer in humans.

Kimbrough said that there is an ongoing debate in the scientific community over how applicable research on rats is to humans. The bodies of rats may simply respond differently to the **PCBs**, she said. Also, the rats in her earlier studies may have been exposed to such a high amount of **PCBs** that their livers were damaged, causing the cancer, she said.

She's happy to learn the results of the new study, even though it didn't support her earlier work.

"It's really good news for the workers," she said.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: March 11, 1999

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

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March 10, 1999, Wednesday, AM cycle

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 731 words

HEADLINE: No link found between **PCB** exposure and cancer in humans

BYLINE: By MARCO LEAVITT, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: ALBANY, N.Y.

BODY:

A biologist whose research over 20 years ago found the first link between **PCBs** and liver cancer in laboratory rats has published a new study finding no evidence that work exposure to the toxins causes cancer in humans.

The General Electric-funded study of more than 7,000 former employees of two GE plants appears in the March issue of The Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

"The bottom line is that we didn't find anything," said researcher Renate Kimbrough.

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The study tracked the medical histories of employees for an average of 31 years and compared causes of deaths to national and regional averages.

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Caspe pointed out that the study only concerned itself with death rates, and didn't take into account the health of survivors. He said that other studies have found that **PCBs** cause reduced birth weights in children and can disrupt a person's immune system. Studies have also found a link between **PCBs** and death rates, he said.

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: March 10, 1999

March 10, 1999

SECTION: WASTES AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

LENGTH: 172 words

HEADLINE: **PCBS**: GE-FUNDED STUDY FINDS NO OCCUPATIONAL CANCER RISK

BODY: The largest study ever of occupational exposure to **PCBs** has found no significant increase in cancer deaths among workers exposed on the job, the New York Times reports.

The 31-year study, published today in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, followed the medical histories of 7,000 workers employed at two General Electric Co. factories in upstate New York between 1946 and 1976. Unlike previous studies, the new study found no increase in cancer deaths among people exposed to **PCBs**.

Dr. John Moore, president of the Washington, DC-based Institute for Evaluating Health Risks, which conducted the study: "The findings ... are consistent with a belief that cancer risks from exposure to **PCBs** have been overstated."

GE, which funded the study, faces potential liability for "hundreds of millions of dollars" in cleanup costs for **PCB**-contaminated sites like the Hudson River (Greenwire, 2/23) (John Cushman, New York Times, 3/10).

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: March 10, 1999

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NBC News Transcripts

SHOW: NBC NIGHTLY NEWS (6:30 PM ET)

March 10, 1999, Wednesday

LENGTH: 62 words

HEADLINE: GE STUDY FINDS **PCBS** NOT CANCER CAUSING

ANCHORS: BRIAN WILLIAMS

BODY:

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:

And a new report tonight challenging a long-held belief that chemical **PCBs** are linked to an increased risk of getting cancer.

The study, paid for by General Electric, the parent company of NBC, found no link. While GE has come under fire for **PCB** pollution, the report found that more than 7,000 former employees of GE plants in upstate New York who had high levels of **PCBs** found in their blood did not have a high rate of death from cancer.

We'll be right back with THE FLEEING OF AMERICA.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: March 11, 1999

March 10, 1999, Wednesday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 14; Column 3; National Desk

LENGTH: 518 words

HEADLINE: Study Finds Little Risks From **PCB's**

BYLINE: By JOHN H. CUSHMAN Jr.

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, March 9

BODY:

The largest ever study of occupational exposure to toxic **PCB** chemicals has found no significant increase in cancer deaths among workers who were exposed on the job.

The study was financed by the General Electric Company, which faces potential liabilities of hundreds of millions of dollars for cleaning up waters, including the Hudson River, that are contaminated by **PCB's**. It is being published on Wednesday in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, a peer-reviewed journal.

The chemicals, **polychlorinated** biphenyls, are complex mixtures that were widely used by industry as insulation in electrical capacitors and transformers from the 1930's to 1977, when their production was banned because of a suspected link to cancer. **PCB's** persist for decades in the environment and can be taken up by fish and other organisms. They are also suspected of causing other health problems, but the study did not address them.

Even though the exposed workers in this study had high levels of the chemicals in their blood, their rate of cancer deaths was not high. Previous studies had found extra cancer deaths after **PCB** exposure. "This is the largest cohort of male and female workers exposed to **PCB's**," the study says. "The lack of any significant elevations in the site-specific cancer mortality of the production workers adds important information about human health effects of **PCB's**."

The science of assessing the risks of **PCB's** and other toxic chemicals is among the trickiest tasks for regulators. This was not the first time that the cancer risks of **PCB's**, the focus of intense regulatory review over the years, have been played down by scientific studies. The Environmental Protection Agency has previously reduced the factors it uses to estimate **PCB** cancer risks.

The study focused on more than 7,000 men and women who worked from 1946 to 1976 in two General Electric factories in upstate New York, following their medical histories for an average of 31 years and comparing the causes of death of the 1,195 who have died to national and regional averages.

The study found that 353 workers died of cancer, while 400 people would be expected to die of cancer in a statistically similar sample.

The study's lead author was Dr. Renate D. Kimbrough, of the Institute for Evaluating Health Risks, a nonprofit research organization in Washington.

"The findings of this study are consistent with a belief that cancer risks from exposure to PCB's have been overstated," said Dr. John A. Moore, president of the institute. He is a former official of the E.P.A. and the National Institutes of Health.

General Electric has fought a vigorous campaign to prevent the Federal Government from requiring it to dredge sediments in waters contaminated by PCB's. It has frequently cited scientific studies that it says show no link between exposure to the chemicals and cancer in humans.

An E.P.A. study on the possible risks of the chemicals' presence in the river is to dictate whether General Electric must clean up contamination from its industrial sites along the Hudson.

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