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PCBs detected in Jesup soil

By Gail Epstein and Gregg Jones
Staff Writers

JESUP, Ga. — State officials were to take soil samples this morning from a residential area surrounding an electrical equipment storage site here where potentially dangerous levels of toxic chemicals called PCBs have been detected.

No specific PCB measurements were available Sunday night in soil and ditches surrounding the Holley Electric Co. site, where state Environmental Protection Division officials say they have found "potentially dangerous" levels of the chemicals.

The state has taken civil action against the company to prevent it from further business, Leonard Ledbetter, head of the state EPD, said Sunday. The facility had been licensed by the federal government to store hazardous materials.

Holley Electric's warehouse is in a primarily residential area, only a dirt path away from Pine View Homes, a brick low-income housing project.

White curtains grace the front windows of the aluminum warehouse, and ivy meanders up the front of the structure near its door. Nearby, a fence topped with barbed wire encloses a lot filled with apparent scrap metal and wood and discarded electrical equipment.

Holley's practice of draining chemicals from such equipment — specifically electric transformers — is what led to the current PCB scare.

Nevertheless, not all residents of this South Georgia town are aware of the potenital danger.

Late Sunday, in a Huddle House on nearby Georgia 301, waiter Bruce Chancey, 25, said he hadn't "heard a single thing," about the event of the previous weekend. Chancey lives a block away from the site.

There have been no evacuations and PCBs have not been discovered in the municipal water supply, said Joel Greene, the mayor of this southeast Georgia city. The PCBs got int the soil and ditches either through "spill or sloppy handling," Green said.

"Why do they issue (toxic materi als permits) in residential areas lik this?" Greene asked in a telephon interview Sunday night.

SEE Jesup 11A

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