NEWPORT, R. I.
NEWS
D. 14,800

OCT 6 1976

Chemical firm halts poison production

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The public's fear of rising levels of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) in the nation's water has led the Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co. to halt production of the chemical.

Monsanto, the only maker of PCB dielectric fluids in the U.S. said Tuesday that it planned to withdraw completely from the market by Oct. 31 of next year.

PCB, widely seen as an ideal fire-resistant dielectric fluid for transformers and capcitors, has also been found to resist biodegradation, causing it to accumulate in the tissues of animals and fish.

"Unfortunately, the very qualities that have made PCBs ideal and even mandatory for these essential uses were also found in the 1970s to be properties causing them to persist and accumulate in the environment," said Earle H. Harbison Jr., general manager of Monsanto's specialty chemicals division.

The company had earlier quit making PCBs for use in carbonless copy paper, fire resistant hydraulic fluids, heat transfer fluids and plasticizers.

Government tests for a three-year period discovered that the levels of PCB in major water basins were not increasing and, in some cases, were actually decreasing Harbison said.

The extension of the closing date until late next year was done to give equipment manufacturers time to conver to other materials.

Other fluids offer the dielectric properties, Harbison said, but all those currently available have less resistance to fire.