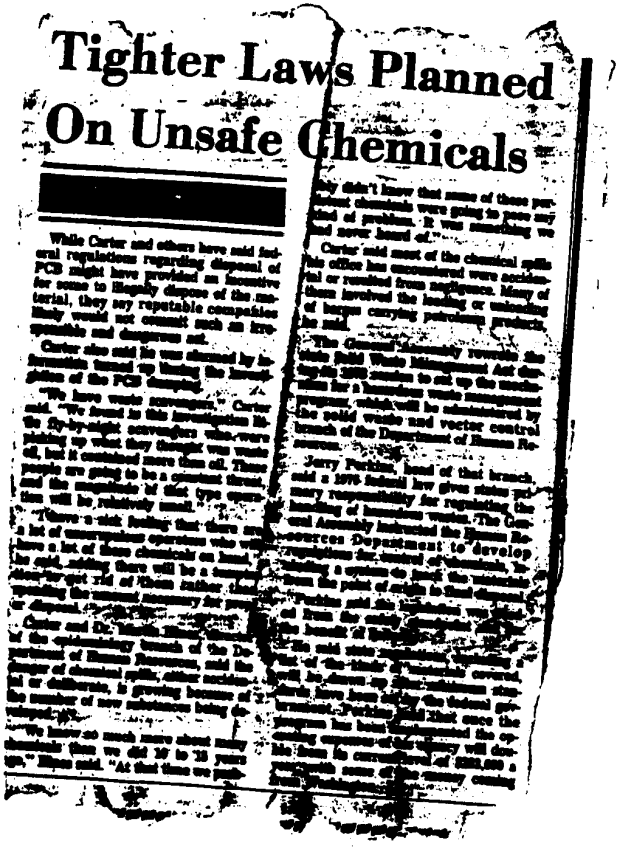

Tighter Laws Planned On Unsafe Chemicals

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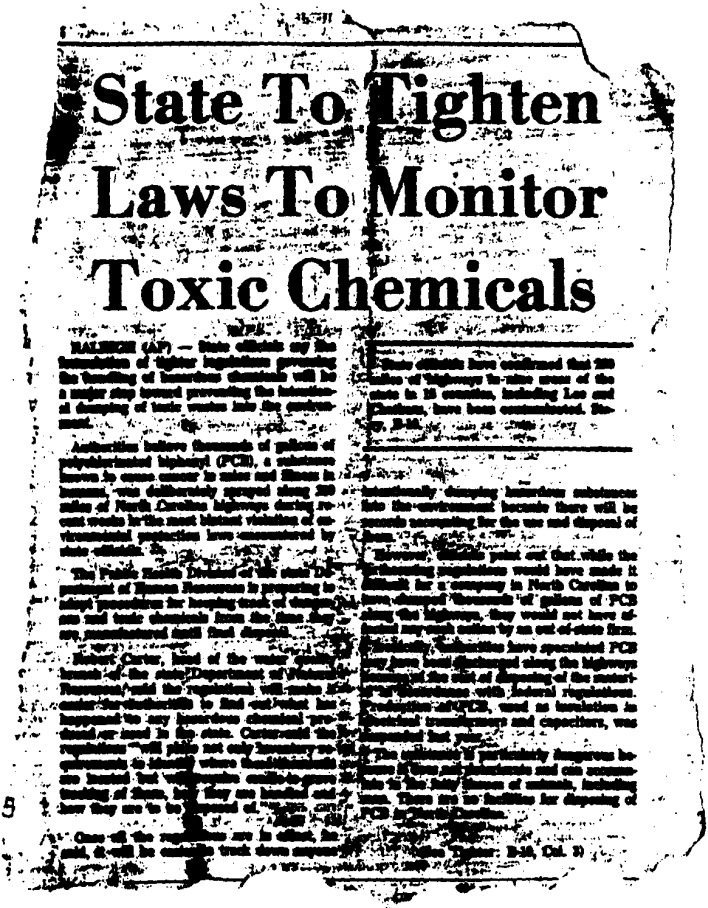

State To Tighten Laws To Monitor Toxic Chemicals

RALEIGH (AP) — State officials say the formulation of tighter regulations governing the handling of hazardous chemicals will be a major step toward preventing the intentional dumping of toxic wastes into the environment.

Authorities believe thousands of gallons of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), a substance known to cause cancer in mice and illness in humans, was deliberately sprayed along 250 miles of North Carolina highways during recent weeks in the most blatant violation of environmental protection laws encountered by state officials.

The Public Health Division of the state Department of Human Resources is preparing to adopt procedures for keeping track of dangerous and toxic chemicals from the time they are manufactured until final disposal.

Robert Carter, head of the water quality branch of the state Department of Natural Resources, said the regulations will make it easier for authorities to find out what has happened to any hazardous chemical produced or used in the state. Carter said the regulations "will place not only inventory requirements to identify where these chemicals are located but will require cradle-to-grave tracking of them, how they are handled and how they are to be disposed of."

Once all the regulations are in effect, he said, it will be easier to track down anyone intentionally dumping hazardous substances into the environment because there will be records accounting for the use and disposal of them.

However, officials point out that while the forthcoming regulations would have made it difficult for a company in North Carolina to have dumped thousands of gallons of PCB along the highways, they would not have affected any such action by an out-of-state firm.

Ironically, authorities have speculated PCB may have been discharged along the highways because of the cost of disposing of the material in accordance with federal regulations. Production of PCB, used as insulation in electrical transformers and capacitors, was suspended last year.

The substance is particularly dangerous because it does not deteriorate and can accumulate in the fatty tissues of animals, including man. There are no facilities for disposing of PCB in North Carolina.

State officials have confirmed that 250 miles of highways in nine areas of the state in 18 counties, including Lee and Chatham, have been contaminated. Story, B-10.

(See Tighter: B-10, Col. 3)

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