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Firm Curbs Sale of Perilous Chemica

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WASHINGTON — The manufacturer of an industrial chemical called PCB has decided to restrict sales of the chemical because of mounting evidence that it can induce birth defects in animals.

The Monsanto Co. of St. Louis said in a letter to Rep. William F. Ryan, D-N.Y., that it would no longer sell PCB for use as a water-resistant plasticizer or as a hydraulic fluid.

Asks Pesticide Ban

In April, the company asked the Dept. of Agriculture to prohibit the use of the chemical in pesticides.

Monsanto said it would continue to manufacture the chemical for use as a coolant in electrical transformers because of its "unique properties" and because its emission into the environment could be controlled in a "closed system" such as a transformer.

PCB, short for polychlorinated biphenyls, is chemically similar to DDT in that it resists biological breakdown. Monsanto has been making it for 40 years under the brand name AROCLOR.

Found in Mother's Milk

There have been increasing scientific reports in recent years that PCB was being found in fish, birds, fruits and even, in miniscule quantities, in human mother's milk. There is evidence that large doses affected the enzymes, and thus sex hormones, in certain animals.

The primary use of PCB has always been as a lubricant in transformers, the purpose for which Monsanto will continue to make it. The chemical also appears in a number of paints and adhesives that require a high degree of corrosive resistance.

Several years ago, Monsanto began a campaign to market it widely for use in such household products as floor waxes, outdoor paints and caulking compounds.

Declines to List Products

The company declined to make public a list of all products now containing PCB. A company spokesman said that publication of such a list would "serve no useful nonpolitical purpose."

The spokesman said Monsa- did not know until recently t the chemical, a liquid that it s in giant drums, was being u as a pesticide.

According to an official of Dept. of Agriculture, PCB used in at least eight differ brands of insecticides now the market. He said the dep ment had begun an "exhaus review" of the hazards of P but had taken no action to p hibit its use.

Ryan, who has conducted year-long campaign to limi not prohibit, the use of PC said he was not completely sa fied with Monsanto's action hoped that sales would be stricted even further.

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