PCB Contamination Probe Finds No Lasting Exposure

ATLANTA, Dec. 1 (UPI) — An investigation into contamination of the food chain in several northwestern states by the cancer-causing chemical PCB has not shown any increased levels of the chemical in exposed workers or consumers, the Center for Disease Control said today.

The federal agency said its investigation, involving two different exposed groups, found PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) levels to be no higher than expected background levels.

The contamination was discovered in August when samples of chicken fat from a Provo, Utah, slaughterhouse were found to contain elevated PCB levels after being tested routinely by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contaminated chickens had been purchased from a large egg-producing farm in Franklin, Idaho.

Food and Drug Administration authorities then traced the source of the feed used at the farm, and discovered contaminated meat meal that came from Pierce Packing Co. in Billings, Mont. The CDC said an electrical transformer at that plant was found to have leaked about 200 gallons of PCBs into a drain line used in the processing of animal meal. The leak had gone unnoticed for two months, affecting many shipments of animal feed.

Very high levels of PCB contamination were found in both chickens and eggs. Public health officials subsequently ordered the destruction of millions of eggs and hundreds of thousands of chickens.

"It is believed that no more contaminated products are in the food chain," the CDC said today.