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Paperboard Packaging Industry Eyes PCB Problem

In response to published reports on possible presence of PCB in paperboard packaging, the following statement is issued by A. T. Lucy, Manager, Boxboard Research & Development Association, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

THE PAPERBOARD PACKAGING INDUSTRY and the Chemical Industry have been aware of the Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) problem and have been working toward its solution for over a year. The former use of PCB in a variety of industrial products accounts for its presence at some levels, virtually everywhere, in the air, water, fish, food and many types of packaging materials.

Even though toxicity levels of PCB have not yet been determined, paperboard packaging companies have been measuring PCB levels in their recycled paperboards, and have instituted production control programs to hold PCB to minimum levels in paperboards for food packaging applications. In addition our industry associations have research programs to develop better tests to measure levels of PCB, determine levels of PCB in all types of packaging materials, and determine transfer of PCB from packaging materials to food or vice-versa.

These programs have been instituted even though PCB is generally acknowledged to be a diminishing problem, a problem that certainly does not warrant scare headlines at this time.

The manufacture and sale of PCB for use in other than totally closed systems (such as heat exchangers) was discontinued over a year ago. This action was taken voluntarily by the sole PCB manufacturer as soon as it was found that high concentration of PCB might cause a public health problem.

The presence of varying levels of PCB in recycled paperboards has been traced to its former use in some office duplicating papers. The use of PCB in office copy paper was voluntarily discontinued by industry on June 1. With this discontinued use, the paper industry viewed the problem as diminishing. Nevertheless, recognizing the possible existence of PCB-contaminated paper in the wastepaper pipeline, paperboard recyclers inaugurated programs to measure and limit PCB content in their food packages.

The American Paper Institute Biological and Chemical Research Committee has been actively working on the PCB problem for over a year, and looks forward to cooperating with a PCB Task

(Continued on Page 18)

PCB PROBLEM

(Continued from Page 14)

Group recently formed by the Government involving 6 federal agencies:

The Office of Science and Technology,
The Council on Environmental Quality,
The Environmental Protection Agency,
The Food and Drug Administration,
The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences,
The U. S. Department of Agriculture.

In addition to coordinating government efforts concerning PCB, the objective of this group is "to better define the PCB problem and its possible implications for human health."

The Paperboard Packaging Industry concurs with the Health, Education and Welfare Department statement issued on September 5, 1971, "based on current scientific knowledge, the government sees no imminent threat to the safety of the food supply or to the public's health . . ."

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