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Monsanto halts PCB 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 capacitors, has been 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.