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File
PCBs

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October 3, 1980

Ms. Ann Gavell
READER'S DIGEST
1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Gavell:

I appreciated the opportunity of discussing with you your forthcoming article on polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's). An article updating and presenting the facts on this subject is timely with the current awareness and interest in hazardous waste and its disposal and would provide a valuable service in making such information available to the general public.

As I indicated, during the past two years several significant reports have been published discussing PCB's, including environmental and health effects and disposal. In addition, numerous accounts describing potential, new technology for destroying and removing PCB's from the environment have been reported. I am enclosing several items which I think will provide you with a rapid summary of these reports.

To reiterate a couple of points--- The hazards of PCB's have been greatly exaggerated. PCB's are not human "cancer-causing" agents and they are not "deadly toxins." PCB's have not been demonstrated to cause human cancer. Extensive human epidemiology studies have been performed on persons known to have worked with or been in contact with PCB's for a number of years. None of these studies found PCB's to cause cancer in humans. Laboratory studies on rats and other animal species are contradictory and recent animal results, including tests performed by the National Cancer Institute, do not support the statement that PCB's "cause cancer" in rats or animals.

Known, proven technology, i.e., high-temperature incineration, is available to totally dispose of (and destroy) PCB's in any form or concentration.

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This method of PCB disposal prescribed by U.S. EPA in the Final Rules of the Toxic Substances Control Act regulations (40 CFR Part 761) was practiced by Monsanto Company for many years at our manufacturing facility to dispose of PCB wastes from our customers as well as our own facility. PCB destruction levels of 99.998% are obtained by this technique.

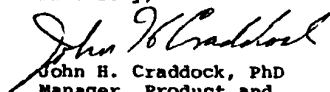
The problem with PCB incineration is not technology but public awareness so that suitable disposal sites can be located in industrial areas without public fear and opposition.

PCB's do degrade in the environment, albeit very, very slowly in many cases. PCB molecules containing lower chlorine levels naturally biodegrade fairly rapidly in the environment; however, higher chlorine compositions (e.g., four or more chlorine atoms per PCB molecule) are very persistent and remain in the environment for many years and can bioaccumulate in life organisms, including lower forms of aquatic life, fish, some plants, mammals and even human tissue.

Recent news accounts and technical articles discuss new, scientific developments in the area of degradation of PCB's and other chlorinated hydrocarbons by "super bugs" -- microorganisms developed in the laboratory that may degrade these persistent species.

I hope the discussion and attached information will be helpful to you in preparing your article and I look forward to reading it. If I can be of further assistance or answer any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,


John H. Craddock, PhD
Manager, Product and
Environmental Safety

jb
enclosures

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