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Doctors say PCB on roads harmless

HALIFAX (AP) — Two doctors testified Friday that PCB-laced oil dumped along North Carolina highways last summer poses no threat to humans or animals and should be left where it is.

The two have treated patients exposed to heavy concentrations of the toxin. They testified as defense attorneys for Robert E. "Buck" Ward Jr. of Raleigh rested their case in Ward's trial on charges of being an accessory and conspirator in the PCB dumpings.

Dr. Leonard Goldwater, a Chatham County physician who has consulted with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and other governmental agencies on environmental problems, said the amount of PCB spilled on the roadsides was not harmful to human or animal life.

Goldwater said the PCB-spilling incident has been blown out of proportion by the news media.

Goldwater said the probability of the spill's causing cancer in humans "is so remote that everyone should forget it. The harm done by frightening everyone is much worse than the long-term chemical threat."

Dr. R. Emmitt Kelly, a retired physician for Monsanto Chemical Co., said in sufficient quantities the chemical could cause reproductive problems in animals. But he said the amount dumped in North Carolina was not significant.

But earlier in the week, Dr. Renate Kimbrough, an Atlanta toxologist, said she thought the PCB spilled on North Carolina roads "could cause harm" to humans and animals. She works with the Federal Center for Disease Control.