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THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION • 475 PARK AVENUE SOUTH • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016 • (212) 725-1262

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PCB LEVELS - PUBLIC HEALTH HAZARD ?

University of Wisconsin researchers report that some manufacturers of detergents and household cleaning products are still using the controversial chemical PCB in their products, despite previous warnings of a potential hazard to health.

Substantial quantities of the chemicals were found in such products more than a year ago, and this was brought to the attention of the Soap and Detergent Association, in an effort to obtain voluntary removal.

However, a recent rescreening is said to indicate that some of the companies continue to include PCBs in their products.

The researchers say there is no reason to classify PCBs as a "deadly poison" to humans, but the effects of PCBs on birds and aquatic life may be "even more detrimental than those of DDT."

Field studies are said to show that some fish in the state have PCB levels of more than 400 parts per million (ppm). The Federal "action limit" at which fish are considered unfit for commercial sales, is five ppm. The investigators believe that there is insufficient information to establish a firm limit on PCB consumption by humans.

► (Studies reported by G.F. Lee and G.D. Veith, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis. 53706.)

Environmental Action

November 13, 1971

More PCB finds

The march of PCB – a chemical similar to DDT – has been traced in marine life in the Atlantic Ocean. The discovery was reported on October 30 by the National Science Foundation, which sponsored research carried out by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts.

Most marine specimens collected by the researchers showed higher levels of PCB than DDT. The scientists speculated that both the pesticide and the industrial chemical enter the ocean from the atmosphere. The effect of PCBs on the organisms was not specifically determined, although scientists judged it to be "of physiological significance."

PCBs are widely used as insulators in electrical capacitors, in transformer oil, in lubricating oils, and in some kinds of copying paper and plastics.

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