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For

McGraw-Edison Company

Power Systems Division

Release Date:

IMMEDIATE

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McGraw-Edison Eliminates PCBs in Entire Capacitor Line

PITTSBURGH, September 30, 1976 -- McGraw-Edison Company, one of the nation's largest producers of high-voltage power capacitors, announced today that beginning November 1, all of its power capacitors will use non-PCB insulating fluid.

Last December, the company announced that an environmentally acceptable substitute for PCBs in power capacitors had been developed jointly with The Dow Chemical Company and was commercially available for customers requesting it. Trade named Edisol, the non-toxic fluid serves the same insulating function as PCBs in power capacitors and, based on tests and actual usage to date, results in a more reliable capacitor, a company spokesman said.

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"Initial response to Edison from the utilities was good," said W.S. Kingsolver, president of McGraw-Edison's Power Systems Division, headquartered in Canonsburg, Pa. "Demand for high-voltage power capacitors having the non-toxic fluid has steadily increased as more utilities turn away from PCBs. Recent orders show that more than two-thirds of those received for new units in all sizes specify the non-PCB fluid. Because we expect that trend to continue, or even to accelerate, all production at our Greenwood, S. C., plant is being converted to non-PCB capacitors."

PCBs, polychlorinated biphenyls, are high toxic chemical compounds which have been linked to cancer, miscarriages, skin diseases and a variety of other ailments. Scientists, environmentalists, and others recently have stepped up activity to have the chemicals totally banned in this country and elsewhere because of their extreme persistence in the environment and their high level of toxicity.

High-voltage power capacitors, such as the ones manufactured by McGraw-Edison, are used by electric utilities to improve characteristics of electric service under certain conditions. They perform a vital function in helping utilities provide adequate amounts of electricity to their customers.

"Recently, the energy situation in this country has focused further attention on capacitors as a means of improving both quality and quantity of electrical service under certain conditions," Mr. Kingsolver said. "Utilities are aware of the fact that capacitors can help save fuel and that without capacitors more generating capacity would be needed."

"But concern over the environment leading to a possible ban on PCBs could have discouraged power capacitor system installations. With the successful introduction of a non-PCB fluid to the market, we don't believe utilities will have to operate under such a restraint," he added.

PCBs are used as an insulating fluid in capacitors, which are hermetically sealed. Until the development of the non-PCB alternative fluid by McGraw-Edison and Dow, there were no insulating fluids on the market that could match the electrical properties of PCBs. The non-PCB fluid is available to all manufacturers of power capacitors, according to McGraw-Edison.

Capacitors require one to three gallons of insulating fluid per unit depending on the size of the unit. The most commonly used size takes slightly less than three gallons of the fluid.

At least one-fourth of the PCBs produced each year -- between four and five million pounds -- are used in power capacitors. At one time in the 40-year history of the chemicals, they were used as softeners in a variety of products, including paints, plastics and rubber and as additives in other products. Recently, their use in this country has been confined exclusively to closed electrical systems.

Dow began development of a replacement fluid five years ago and was joined by McGraw-Edison in refining that fluid for use in power capacitors. Selected utilities located throughout the country began installation of Edisol-filled capacitors early this year. Commercial production of the units started at the McGraw-Edison Power Systems Division's Greenwood, S. C., plant in March.

"McGraw-Edison's testing program, conducted over a five-year period and the experience to date with hundreds of utility installations indicate that capacitors filled with Edisol perform better and are more reliable than PCB-filled capacitors," Mr. Kingsolver said. "There were no failures, for example, in accelerated life tests in which the units were exposed to voltage stress and temperature ranges greatly in excess of those experienced under normal operating conditions. In other testing, electrical losses were the same as for PCB-filled units over the full operating temperature range. The new fluid is not only an acceptable replacement for PCBs, but represents an improvement in capacitor design."

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