PCB Discharges Into Waterways Barred by the EPA

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By a Wall Street Journal Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON—The Environmental Protection Agency issued rules prohibiting the industrial discharge into waterways of polychlorinated biphenyls, a group of chemicals linked to a number of serious health problems.

EPA Administrator Russell Train, in one of his last official acts before leaving office today, said the rules won't allow any discharge of the chemicals by industrial plants once the regulations take effect. Industries must meet the EPA prohibition within one year.

Congress already has outlawed the manufacture of the chemicals, known as PCBs, after Jan. 1, 1979. The same law will ban all processing and distribution of PCBs in commerce after June 1, 1979.

A proposal the EPA made last July would have sharply restricted PCB discharges but wouldn't have banned them. The EPA estimates that nearly 3,000 pounds of PCBs are dumped into waterways each year. PCBs are most commonly used as liquid insulation for electrical equipment.

Mr. Train said he was ordering the ban rather than restricting the discharges because PCBs "have been shown to be highly toxic, persistent and nonbiodegradable." He added that PCBs "may cause cancer in humans." Also, they are known to cause skin disease and liver problems, and laboratory tests with monkeys have shown a high incidence of reproductive failure.

The new rules follow the EPA's decision in December 1975 to ask industrial users of PCBs to restrict their use voluntarily, and there have been some cutbacks. The rules prohibit discharges of PCBs by manufacturers of the chemicals and also by plants that use PCBs in the production of electrical transformers and capacitors.

Major makers and users of the chemicals include Westinghouse Electric Corp., General Electric Co., Aerovox Industries Inc., the Cornell-Dubilier electronics division of Federal Pacific Electric Co., Sprague Electric Co., Research-Cottrell Inc. and Sangamo Electric Co.

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PCB Discharge Ban Is Ordered

United Press International

The Environmental Protection Agency yesterday ordered a ban on the discharge into water of PCBs, industrial chemicals which have contaminated fish in some parts of the country.

"The present problem of PCB contamination in the environment is so severe that in many waters throughout the United States PCB loads are already in excess of the criterion in our proposals," EPA Administrator Russell E. Train said.

The ban is against the direct discharge of PCBs into water by plants using them, mostly installations which make electrical transformers and capacitors. Not affected are indirect discharges, those from municipal sewage treatment plants, which will be taken care of by separate regulations being developed by EPA.

New York state has recommended limits on the consumption of fish from parts of the Hudson River as a result of PCB contamination, and similar restrictions have been imposed on certain fish in Lakes Michigan and Ontario.

The chemical is suspected to cause liver damage and reproductive problems in test animals and, because it travels up the food chain, is a probable hazard to man.