To: M.E. Klaus
J. Ortiz
F.A. Provorny
J.C. Weber
D. Wood

From: Glynn Young

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PCB Ban Is Issued By EPA to Put End To Most of Its Uses

Environmental Protection Agency last week issued its final rules banning the manufacture of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and phasing out most uses of the chemicals.

The rules are estimated to have a total, first-year cost for all economic sectors affected ranging between $58 million and $105 million, while the total cost to manufacturers of diarylide and phthalocyanine pigments is projected at about $5.6 million over a two-year period, the agency says.

EPA administrator Douglas Costle noted that "although PCBs are no longer being produced in this country, we will now bring under control the vast majority of PCBs still in use," thereby helping prevent further contamination of air, water and food supplies "from a toxic and very persistent man-made chemical."

All substances containing over 50 parts-per-million of PCBs will be subject to regulatory control, while EPA will bar any use of waste oil contaminated with any level of PCBs. This waste oil is now used extensively throughout the US to control dust on roadways.

The PCB rules, which EPA was authorized to develop as a result of the passage of the Toxic Substances Control Act, have among their requirements that, as of January 1, 1979, pigment makers cannot make products or use processes that contain PCBs at any step in the reaction sequence above the 50 ppm limit, unless these producers obtain an exemption from EPA.

After July 1, 1979, the processing or distribution in commerce of pigments with more than 50 ppm of PCBs will be barred, moreover, unless an exemption has been obtained.

In addition, this 50 ppm ceiling applies to the manufacture of chemicals other than pigments, as well as processing steps, unless an exemption is obtained. And EPA will bar the export or import of PCBs (except wastes) as of the effective date of the final rules unless a similar exemption is obtained.