Greensboro Daily News 8/11/78 Friday

Arrests Expected

PCB Probe Getting 'Leads'

RALEIGH (AP) — State Attorney General Rufus Edmisten Thursday said investigators are developing leads he expects to result in the arrest of persons responsible for the dumping of toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) along the shoulders of about 70 miles of North Carolina highways.

Edmisten said four agents of the State Bureau of Investigation have been assigned to the case and an investigator for the Environmental Protection Division of his office is coordinating the activities of several state agencies involved in the case.

Urging the public to report any information that might help in the investigation, Edmisten said he plans to "throw the book" at the persons responsible.

PCBs, used in the manufacture and repair of electrical transformers at a number of plants in the state, are known to cause cancer in laboratory animals. They are considered to be especially dangerous because they accumulate in the food chain, building up in the fatty tissues of humans.

Strips of chemical spills containing PCBs have been confirmed along 70 miles of highways in Warren, Chatham, Alamance, Hoke, Johnston, Franklin, Moore and Harnett counties. Tests are being run to determine the content of spills along more than 100 miles of highways in Wake, Nash, Chatham, Warren, Wilson, Edgecombe and Lee counties.

Dr. Martin Hines, director of the Epidemiology Branch of the Department of Human Resources, said tests are being made to determine whether PCBs have gotten into wells or been consumed by cattle but that here has been no indication of that so far. He said officials doubt PCBs would seep or be washed into water supplies because they are not water soluble.

"We are getting some calls and I think we are developing some leads," Edmisten said in an interview. "The latest I've heard from our investigators was that they felt good about soon developing some specific leads.

"We're treating this as a criminal act," he said. "We're doing crime scene searches and we have alerted all police departments, all sheriff's departments to be on the lookout."

The attorney general said there are seven state laws that likely were violated by those who dumped PCBs along the highways.

"What I'd like to do is catch these people and throw the book at them because we're talking about something that is wanton and willful, and it incenses me," he said.

Gov. Jim Hunt posted a reward of $2,500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone responsible for the spills.

There has been speculation that the chemicals were dumped along the highways from tankers from out-of-state, possibly from someone trying to avoid new federal regulations governing the disposal of dangerous chemical wastes.

Officials of the state Department of Natural Resources and Human Development said they had been flooded with calls from people who live in the affected areas.

Disposal Of PCB Difficult To Handle

From Staff Reports

The cancer-causing chemical which state officials believe was purposely dumped along more than 70 miles of North Carolina highways in the past week is one of the most toxic chemicals in use in this country, and it is one of the hardest to get rid of.

The Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a total ban on the chemical, and the only manufacturer of it in this country, the Monsanto Co., voluntarily suspended production of it last year.

Polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) is used primarily as insulating fluid in heavy-duty electrical equipment in power plants, industries and large buildings across the nation.

It is used also as insulation in heat-transferring machinery, employed in the processing of some foods and in the manufacture of animal feed.

It is in that latter use that PCB has caused the most problems, and leaks of the chemical from the heat-transfer equipment into processed foods such as chicken, milk, fish, eggs and poultry led the EPA to propose the ban on the chemical.

PCB has been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals which have ingested it, and it is believed to cause cancer in humans.

Scientists have found no safe dosage of the chemical. Any direct contact can cause a reaction, they have said.

EPA has proposed regulations that would prohibit manufacturers from resuming the production of PCBs after the first of the year. The regulations would also ban any processing or distribution of the chemical after July 1 of next year.

MONS 001970