

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N. Y.
SARATOGIAN
(ALBANY MARRE) ARE
D. 11 000

SEP 9 1975

GE says 1,300 jobs may go with PCB

By CHAT BLAKEMAN
AND CANDACE HOLLAR

HUDSON FALLS — About 1,300 workers at General Electric's Hudson Falls and Fort Edward plants could be put out of work if the company is forced to comply with a state directive ordering elimination of PCB discharges at the plants, officials said today.

Stuart Richel, counsel to GE's environmental protection office, local plant manager Lucas Hart Jr., and James Herger, personnel director for the plants, all said that if Environmental Conservation Commissioner Ogden R. Reid's efforts to halt all release of PCB's into the Hudson River from the two plants were successful, both plants could be forced to shut down.

We are faced with the possibility of complying with an order, the terms of which are not achievable," Richel said.

Asked Friday what the company would do if the state ordered a "zero discharge," Hart threw up his hands and said, "We'll shut down and 1,300 people will be out of work."

He could not be reached for comment today, but Herger confirmed the plants might be closed if the order stands.

The order, made public Sunday by Reid, would force the company to reduce its discharge of PCB to two pounds by Dec. 31, 1975 and to eliminate it entirely by Sept. 30, 1976. In addition, the company would be required to take steps to repair damage to the river caused by past practices.

In a related development, Dr. Theodore Cooper, assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, called Monday for "immediate action" to end discharges of PCB into the Hudson. He

is the first federal official to make such a request publicly.

Richel said the possibility the plants would actually be shut down is small, and General Electric will protest Reid's order at a hearing Oct. 6 in Albany.

"The implication by the Department of Environmental Conservation that there has been inactivity (efforts to prevent PCB pollution) is erroneous and unfair," Richel said.

In a statement released Monday, Hart said G.E. had achieved "considerable progress" toward reducing the amount of PCB, a polychlorinated biphenyl, which it discharges. At one time the company was discharging up to 30 pounds a day, but this has been cut to about five, Hart said.

In addition, he said the type of PCB found in fish samples was not the type currently being used at the two plants. He said it was an older, more stable compound that the company discontinued using in 1971. He said the present type used has not been found in fish, although it has been found in water and vegetation samples.

"General Electric will continue its efforts to reduce discharges to the lowest feasible level as rapidly as possible," Hart said. "The company feels it would be a breach of faith to make a commitment to achieve 'zero discharge' by a certain date because there simply is no known technically feasible method to achieve this goal at this time."

Technical feasibility is likely to be a central question at the October hearing. Currently, the chemical is not treated at the plant, but finds its way into the river through spillages and other "poor housekeeping", according to Dr. Ernest Regan of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.