

High amounts of PCB 1407 dumped in N.C. found in women's breast milk

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — A study says 12 women living along North Carolina roadsides where toxic PCB was illegally dumped have a higher level of that same type of PCB in their breast milk than most women.

However, the study also says that although the level of that type of polychlorinated biphenyls was higher, their overall level of PCB was similar to that of most women.

The researchers who conducted the study said they had not seen any illnesses either in the women or their children attributable to the PCB.

The study was made as part of the Breast Milk and Formula Project of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in Research Triangle Park. The study has been submitted to the Journal of the American Medical Association, but has not yet been accepted, project director Dr. Walter Rogan said late Thursday.

PCB like that dumped in 14 North Carolina counties in 1978 once was used in electrical transformers because of its insulating properties, but it was banned in 1978 by the Environmental Protection Agency because it was suspected of causing cancer.

In all, about 25 percent of the 900 women in the study had some of the chemicals that were dumped along the roadway, said Mary Tully, research coordinator for the Infant Feeding Study at Wake Medical Center, one of three centers where the study is conducted.

"The PCBs (in the 12 women) resembles Aroclor 1260," a type of PCB, Rogan said. "That type

shows up about 25 percent of the time in, as far as we know, normal people of background exposure."

"The 12 had specific levels of PCB — each of them had some exposure in some way," Tully said. "One woman had walked through it looking at some land, most of the others lived along the road or near it."

"There's no detectable hazard," Rogan said. "We also follow the children and have seen no illnesses contributable to PCBs in breast milk so far."

"In addition to those kids, we have 840 others we followed, some up to age 4½, and thus far, we've not seen any illness we think is attributable to PCBs specifically," he said.

Soil along 210 miles of state roadside was contaminated by the illegally dumped chemicals. The state has dug up that soil and is burying it in a dump near Afton in Warren County.

Warren County residents and their supporters have been protesting the dumping, and 242 people have been arrested in less than two weeks as protesters have tried to stop trucks headed for the dump.

A dump truck headed for the landfill overturned Friday, spilling dirt contaminated with PCBs into a soybean field.

M.C. Adams, manager of maintenance and equipment for the state Department of Transportation, said the truck veered off a Johnston County road to avoid a collision with another vehicle. There were no injuries and state crews quickly scooped up the spilled dirt.

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1407 Study shows increased PCB levels

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — A study of mussels off the Southern California coast has revealed increased levels of PCBs, heavy metal and pesticides in some harbors, a state official says.

The Water Resources Board and the state Department of Fish and Game recently released the results of the joint mussel testing study, named "Mussel Watch," which was conducted mainly from 1979 to 1981.

Mussels from the Long Beach-Los Angeles Harbor showed an increase of 300 times the concentration of DDE, a pesticide derivative of DDT, the study showed.

Some of the highest levels off the California coast of chlordane, copper, lead and zinc were found in samples near Marina del Rey. The levels of the pesticide chlordane were 10 times higher than at nearby sampling stations and 100 times higher than in Northern California.

Newport Harbor mussels showed a 30-fold increase of DDE between 1979 and 1981, and levels of chlordane and PCBs from the mussels in Anaheim Bay were termed "abnormally high."

The study indicates the amount of toxins has been decreasing in Northern California while it has been increasing in Southern California. No warnings of collecting or eating mussels have been issued.

"We are still not able to determine how these recent findings will impact man," said Rolf Mall, environmental services supervisor for the State Water Resources Control Board's Long Beach regional office. "But we feel that the data is pretty reliable."

"At this time there is cause for concern, but only a low level of alarm. But from this point we will observe the program with interest, and the state board is looking at it."

Authorities say they do not know at this time where the pollutants are coming from, but are looking at marine traffic, wastewater discharge and home use of DDT.

"We are not able at this time to eliminate any possibility as the source of the problems," Mall said. "And it could be a collection of all of them."

Five mussel monitoring stations have been set up between Huntington Beach Pier and Crescent Bay, the report said.