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Toxic chemicals found in most Superior fish

DULUTH, Minn. (AP) — The presence of toxic industrial chemicals called polychlorinated biphenyls has been found in 28 kinds of fish, comprising most of the marine life varieties in Lake Superior, research being conducted by the Lake Superior Basin Study Centre indicates.

The samples of marine life were gathered in a three-week tour of the lake last month by a group of Duluth scientists. Preliminary findings were released by Centre director Wayland Swain.

All fish taken as samples showed the presence of PCBs, Swain said, but few contained levels high enough to be considered immediately alarming.

Fish containing the highest levels of PCBs are generally not consumed directly

by humans but some are part of the lake's food chain, he said.

The fish containing the highest level was the Ciscowet trout, an oily, deepwater fish taken from the trough between Grand Portage and Isle Royal.

The trout contained from 8.2 to 8.4 parts per million of PCBs, far below levels found recently in trout from Lake Michigan and carp from Minnesota's Lake Pepin, but only slightly above the safe level of five ppm established by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

PCBs are known to cause birth defects in fish, birds and mammals. Some scientists believe PCBs can cause cancer in humans.

PCBs are used in such industrial products as plastics, printers ink, hydraulic fluid and electrical insulators.

Swain said identifying the sources of the chemicals was one of the main reasons for the study, being made in co-operation with the Michigan and Minnesota departments of natural resources and the Ontario ministry of the environment. The project is sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the International Joint Commission.

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