February 1, 1972

Ms. Carol Norberg
Assembly Committee on Environmental Quality
California Legislature
Room 4167
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Ms. Norberg,

From the beginning stages when Monsanto became aware of the presence of polychlorinated bephenyls (PCBs) in the environment we have progressively restricted the marketing of these materials to uses which we believed could be controlled and for which alternative materials were not commercially available.

The controlled applications which were also referred to as "closed" systems included the use in electrical transformers, electrical capacitors, heat transfer systems, gas transmission turbines and vacuum pumps. We are now in the process of further restricting these uses and are informing our customers of this change.

The "open" system applications included such uses as fire resistant industrial fluids, coatings, sealants, carbonless copy-paper, plasticizers, adhesives and inks. We terminated the sole of PCBs for the majority of these applications on August 30, 1970 with the remainder terminated at the end of the first quarter of 1971.

Through the years considerable research effort has been expended in the search for an alternative fluid for use as a dielectric in transformers and capacitors. With the emergence of the PCB environmental problem this activity has been accelerated not only at Monsanto's laboratories but at customers', competitors', governmental and academic laboratories. To date no suitable replacement has been found.

Without the availability of a suitable replacement for use in the electrical industry a total ban on PCBs as proposed by Congressman Ryan would result in extended electrical brown-outs and black-outs or worst yet in explosions and fires with extensive injuries and property damage.

I have attached copies of articles further describing Monsento's voluntary curtailment program and copies of reports prepared by representatives of the electrical industry relating to the importance of PCBs in transformers and capacitors.

I hope this information is useful to you. If I can be of further service please let me know.

Sincerely,

W. B. Papageorge
Manager
Environmental Protection

WBP:pw
Encls.

MONS 094001

February 2, 1972

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Gentlemen:

Attached is a Question and Answer list for responding to PCB inquiries which I offered to mail to you at our December 10th ANSI C-107 meeting.

I recognize that the list is not complete but I hope it will serve as a good start with further additions made by your respective committees. Should any help be required from Monsanto in responding to additional questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

W. B. Papageorge
Manager, Environmental
Protection

/hg

attachment

MONS 094002

cc: Messrs: A. M. Salazar - NEMA
P. G. Benignus - BOSC

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Questions and Answers For ANSI
PCB

1. Question

What is PCB?

Answer

PCB are initials which stand for polychlorinated biphenyl. PCB is a family of chlorinated hydrocarbons which have long been used as a fire-resistant safety fluid in electrical components.

2. Question

Is PCB in Askarel?

Answer

Askarel is a generic name for the PCB-containing fluids used in electrical transformers and capacitors. Individual electrical equipment manufacturers have different trade names which describe their specific fluid.

3. Question

Explain the current environmental flap over PCB.

Answer

In the mid-60's, scientific instruments became sophisticated to the point where parts-per-million or even parts-per-billion of a substance could be detected in the environment.

Swedish scientists, looking for DDT, encountered "interferring substances" in their laboratory analyses. These substances they identified as PCB.

Subsequently other scientists in other parts of the world looked for and found PCB in a variety of samples; thus leading to the conclusion that PCB exists in the worldwide environment.

MONS 094003

4. Question

How does PCB get into the environment?

Answer

Probably through improper handling, use and disposal. A frequently cited accident occurred in Japan in 1968 when PCB leaked into rice oil which the Japanese use for cooking. Levels in the oil reached 2,000 to 3,000 parts-per-million.

However, it should be emphasized that when properly handled, used and disposed of, PCB can be as safe to use as any other chemical -- many of which are much more dangerous than PCB.

5. Question

Is PCB toxic?

Answer

Toxicity is a relative term. Some studies have shown it is toxic to certain species of birds and fish. More important, PCB is a persistent chemical which builds up in the environment. It, therefore, should not be allowed to escape to the environment.

6. Question

Does PCB cause birth defects?

Answer

Again, some studies have shown it can be detrementnl to the reproductive cycles of certain species of wildlife.

7. Question

Is the public in any immediate danger?

Answer

The Federal Government at a press conference in September, 1971, stated emphatically that the public was in no danger from present levels of PCB now in the environment. They said proper steps were being taken to reduce further escape of PCB which would ultimately reduce even the low levels currently being found in the environment.

8. Question

How can PCB be disposed of?

Answer

Under high temperature, controlled incineration, PCB breaks down into hydrochloric acid, carbon dioxide and water. There are three commercial incinerators in the United States which can handle disposal of used fluids. Contact your supplier for information about returning used fluids for proper disposal.

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WBP 9/7/72