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Imports Of PCB Rising

Called Tactic To Avoid Cutback

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., said yesterday that with U.S. production of the toxic chemical group PCB to end in 1977, imports of the substance have risen sharply — apparently in an effort to avoid cutting back its use.

Under the new Toxic Substances Act, all use of PCB in the United States must end by June 1, 1979; but Aspin said the sole U.S. manufacturer, Monsanto Chemical Co., plans to end PCB production by October 1977.

"Unless imports are quickly ended," Aspin said in a statement, "PCBs will continue to threaten the environment — and at an accelerating rate, judging from this year's imports."

He said he will ask the Environmental Protection Agency to ban further PCB imports before the 1979 legal deadline, after the Carter administration takes office.

Asked about Aspin's statement, an EPA spokesman said the agency has no intention now of speeding up the PCB ban.

He said Congress allowed the two-year delay to give industries time to obtain suitable replacements for PCB, and the agency still considers that a valid approach.

PCB, a group of related chemicals called "polychlorinated biphenyls," is used in industrial and mechanical applications.

It often escapes to the environment through industrial waste discharges, accidental release, and the junking of equipment.

PCB has not been directly proven to harm humans, but has been known to cause serious illness in laboratory animals and was found by the EPA in samples of human mothers' milk, indicating that it is reaching and being absorbed by humans.

Aspin said data from the U.S. Customs Service showed that the United States imported 316,985 pounds of PCB — all from France — during the first eight months of 1976, far more than the 270,489 pounds imported during all of 1973.

The EPA spokesman said, however, that stockpiled PCB could not be used, in any case, after the 1979 ban on further use takes effect.

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