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DER Finds Chemicals In Water Supplies

HARRISBURG (UPI) — Environmental Resources Secretary Maurice Goddard said Friday hazardous chemicals have been found in four public water supplies but the concentrations are too small to be dangerous.

Goddard said DER tested 95 public water supplies and found traces of PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls) in Lock Haven and Lewistown. DDT was found in Pt. Marion, Fayette County and Waynesburg.

The levels found were much less than those set in recommended federal drinking water standards and there is nothing to indicate that corrective action should be taken, Goddard said.

PCB's are clorinated hydrocarbons that tend to remain in the environment for a long time before breaking down. They are found in hydraulic fluids, pesticides, electrical transformers and capacitors and in carbonless copy paper.

Monsanto Industrial Chemical Co. is the only producer of PCB's and it does not have a production plant in Pennsylvania, Goddard said.

Goddard said traces of PCB's also were found in the Delaware River estuary, in the Schuylkill River at Philadelphia and in the Monongahela River at Rankin, Allegheny County, and DDT was found in the Lehigh River near Easton.

But tests showed there were no PCB's in nearby drinking water supplies, he said.

Goddard said the traces of DDT found in the Springhill Water Co. system at Pt. Marion and in the Waynesburg water system were about 1,000 times less than the recommended federal standard.

Goddard said DER will continue to check for the presence of these chemicals in other locations and, in cooperation with the Fish Commission, will test fish flesh to see if the chemicals are present.

PCB's and other clorinated hydrocarbons can build up to unsafe levels in fish if members of the underwater food chain, such as plants and insects, are contaminated.

The fish will be collected this spring and results should be available by mid-summer, Goddard said.

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