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EPA Control of PCBs Too Slow, GAO Warns

WASHINGTON (FNS) — The General Accounting Office has advised Congress that, despite a statutory mandate put in place in 1976, the Environmental Protection Agency has been ineffective and slow in controlling use and disposal of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a highly toxic carcinogen.

PCBs, part of a class of chlorinated hydrocarbons, have been widely used in industry as fluids for heat transfer systems, gas turbines and vacuum pumps; as plasticizers in paints, adhesives and caulking compounds; as fillers for coating waxes; as dye carriers in carbonless copy paper, and in manufacturing electrical capacitors and transformers.

Laboratory animal studies have shown PCBs cause reproductive failure, cancer, gastric disorders, skin lesions, and other serious health problems.

The most serious incident involving PCBs occurred in 1979 in Billings, Mont., when 200 gallons of PCB-containing fluid leaked into a parking plant's drainage system and were eventually processed into animal feed and grease.

Before the episode ended, a Federal investigation had resulted in destruction of some 500,000 chickens; 3,000,000 eggs; 4,000 hogs; 74,000 cakes and bakery items; 600,000 pounds of assorted animal feeds, and 1.2 million pounds of grease. The cost to private enterprise was estimated at over $2 million.

In its examination of what EPA has been doing to control PCB use and disposal, GAO reported the agency has made only limited progress. Questions were said to remain about whether EPA is inspecting those facilities whose use of PCB poses the greatest potential threat of environmental contamination.

Current EPA inspection strategy allocates inspections among 11 industrial sectors but, GAO noted, it doesn't include some likely PCB facilities — such as transformer repair shops, waste oil dealers and disposal sites. In addition, Congress was told, the proposed inspection allocation is based on how the 11 industries are distributed nationally, not regionally.

EPA is said to have acknowledged that such modifications are needed but has yet to follow through on this. The agency also was found to have failed to develop a complete list of potential PCB facilities within the targeted industry groups. As a result, said the GAO investigators, many facilities have been insulated from the possibility of PCB inspections.

The industry groups targeted for PCB inspection and control include railroads, metals, chemicals, utilities, food and food, paper and lumber, commercial buildings, stone, clay and glass products, textiles, mining and automobiles.

Along with EPA's slow rulemaking and inspection program development, GAO reported "little assurance that industry is complying with the Congressionally-mandated regulations for PCB control." In the five regions the watchdog group reviewed, it found a 45 per cent violation rate among the facilities inspected in which PCBs were found.

"While the seriousness of the violation varied," GAO said, "contamination incidents involving even relatively small amounts of PCBs can have severe economic and potential health consequences."

Araskog Director Of Dayton Hudson

MINNEAPOLIS — Rand V. Araskog, chairman and chief executive officer of International Telephone & Telegraph Corp., has been elected a director of Dayton Hudson Corp.

Araskog, 50 years old, becomes the 10th member of the Dayton Hudson board, and the 10th non-management director.

IN BRIEF

Diane Drescher Joins Puritan

NEW YORK — Diane Drescher has joined Puritan Sportswear, a division of Warnaco, as director of design and development for sweaters and full-fashioned knit shirts. She succeeds Larry Cicci, who has joined another division of Warnaco. A company spokesman said details of his appointment will be announced shortly.

Drescher was formerly the designer of sweaters at Ron Chereskin. She reports to Mort Stone, vice-president of merchandising for sweaters and knit shirts.

In a related move, Brenda Peskin has been promoted to designer of sweaters and full-fashion. She had been the assistant designer.

Peskin reports to Drescher.

Sage-Allen Closing Enfield Mall Store

ENFIELD, Conn. (FNS) — Because of a drop in profits in the last two years, the Enfield Mall department store of Sage-Allen & Co., Hartford, Conn. will be closed by the end of February.

The closing of the 40,000-square-foot store will affect 65 employes who will be offered positions in the company's 19 other stores throughout the state, according to Lafayette Keeney, board chairman and chief executive officer.

Keeney said that clearance sales are planned.

The Enfield branch had shown profits in the first three years of its operation, from 1969 to 1972, but sales began to dwindle from then on with the opening of a new mall at nearby Enfield Square diverting business from the older Enfield Mall.

In its best years, Keeney said, the store's sales had averaged from $75 to $80 a square foot, but this had dropped to about $40. Sales were $1.7 million in each of the past two years.

Wellot Resigns At Eagle-Cardin

NEW YORK — Sue Wellot has resigned as merchandise manager of dress shirts at Eagle Shirtmakers-Pierre Cardin, effective immediately.

She will be retained as a consultant on a part-time basis to complete the spring 1980 dress shirt line. A successor at Eagle has not yet been named.

Wellot told DNR she plans to go into her own business, which she will announce shortly.

Wellot joined Eagle four-and-a-half years ago.



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