

NEWSCLIP/APCUT

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Production to stop of 'harmful chemical'

ALL UK production of the controversial chemical PCB will end at the end of the month when Newport's Monsanto chemical plant shut down their manufacturing unit.

PCB — polychlorinated biphenyls — has mainly been used as an insulating liquid in electrical capacitors and transformers.

It has similar qualities to DDT, in that it is not very toxic but is persistent and builds up over long periods, especially in fish.

No redundancies

The company are withdrawing the chemical after a long phasing out process following claims that it is harmful to the environment.

The decision will have little effect on the Newport plant. Only about six men are employed in the manufacture of the chemical and the firm say there will be no redundancies.

Fears about the chemical arose in the early seventies when it was found in fish. The chemical was later traced to thousands of dead sea birds.

Monsanto then imposed a voluntary ban and refused to sell it to any customer where they thought the use was not controllable.

Alternative

The firm announced in January that they would phase out and end production as soon as an alternative was found.

Now they believe there are enough other products on the market.

Monsanto have shut down their other plant which produced PCB in America. But the chemical is still being manufactured by others in France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

It is believed the manufacturing unit at Newport's Monsanto plant will be scrapped.

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EUROPEAN
CHEMICAL NEWS

Weekly

22 OCT 1976

Monsanto to quit European PCB market next year

MONSANTO Europe has now followed its US parent in announcing its exit from the market for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The company says it will close down its Newport, UK, plant and withdraw completely from the market by October 31, 1977. The plant is a small part of its UK operations, employing only six people.

The firm withdrawal date was given by John Mason, director Monsanto industrial chemicals Europe, who had previously announced in January the company's intention to phase out PCBs as soon as alternatives were available.

Consultations with its twenty or so major European customers have convinced the company that substitutes do now exist in commercial quantities. But customers are not so convinced.

About five years ago, Monsanto took the lead in the US and Europe by voluntarily restricting sales of PCBs to manufacturers of electrical capacitors and transformers, both closed system appli-

cations. In the US, where Monsanto is the only producer, this effectively halved the size of the market.

The other two major European suppliers, Bayer and Rhône-Poulenc (Progelec), are still selling the products in a wider number of applications. But under an EEC directive, their use will eventually be restricted to closed electrical systems and applications where their flame-resistant properties are paramount, such as hydraulic equipment in mining and heat transfer fluids in specified industries. The European market currently totals 5-7 000 ton/year.

Alternative products include Dow Corning's polydimethyl siloxane for transformers and Dow Chemical's monochlorodiphenyl oxide for capacitors. In the latter use, however, there is also a trend towards use of commodity-type products such as phthalate esters. Monsanto's own research for a PCBs alternative has now been abandoned.

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CHEMICAL AGE

Weekly 4,427

15 OCT 1976

Monsanto will quit PCB production

Monsanto has said it will withdraw completely from the polychlorinated biphenyl market 'no later than 31 October 1977', following the passing by the US Congress of the toxic substances bill last week. The bill stipulated that all PCB production should cease within two years, and all sales should end within 2½ years. PCBs are used as dielectric insulating fluids in transformers and capacitors.

Monsanto has announced at the beginning of this year its long-term intention to phase out production and

sales of PCBs in both the US and Europe (30 January 1976). In the US, Monsanto is the sole producer of PCBs, while in Europe it shares the market with Bayer, Rhône-Poulenc and some smaller producers of the material.

PCBs have been under attack for a number of years because of their persistence in the food chain, and their applications have become more and more restricted to closed applications. The US market is about 40 million lb/year, while the European market is about 2-300

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