

trends

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PCBs

Supercharged Bugs Go After Sewage. Use of high purity oxygen to "supercharge" microorganisms in activated sludge sewage treatment plants has been accepted by Salem, Oregon officials as the best solution to their seasonal sewage overload problems. Salem is a leading food processing center and has a large high-strength waste flow during the canning season. Simply described, the process increases air oxygen content by removing nitrogen, then shoots the concentrated oxygen to treatment plant microorganisms. The "bugs" charged up by the increased oxygen are in better condition to react to the rapidly changing characteristics of the sewage.

HEW Recommends Standards for Noise and Carbon Monoxide Exposures. The criteria for recommended standards governing employee exposure to noise and carbon monoxide have been submitted by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare to the U.S. Department of Labor. The noise document recommends that exposure limits now being enforced by the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration—a time-weighted average of 90 dBA for an 8-hour workday—be retained. HEW has recommended that the level be reduced to 85 dBA after completion of engineering feasibility studies to be conducted by the Department of Labor in consultation with HEW. The 85 dBA level would have immediate application for new installations, however. The carbon monoxide recommendation would reduce the present Department of Labor standard of 50 ppm to 35 ppm as determined by a time-weighted average exposure for an 8-hour workday.

Nashville Makes Good Use of Wastes. City governments which have suffered over what to do with solid waste should be heartened to hear that Nashville, Tenn. is building a thermal transfer system to heat and cool a loop of downtown office buildings by burning garbage. The \$12 million project includes \$8 million for the plant and processing equipment and \$4 million for underground distribution lines. When completed in 1974, it will provide air conditioning and heat for 24 office buildings. Two refuse-fuel boilers will consume 1,440,000 lb of municipal refuse daily and generate 135,000 lb of steam per hour. Steam will be supplied to the buildings during the heating season, and will be used to drive centrifugal refrigeration units to provide air conditioning in the summer. The plant has been designed to eventually have five refuse boilers and consume 1,500 tons of waste per day.

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long enough?*

Federal Task Force Says To Block Use of PCB. A report has been recently issued by the Federal government's task force on chemicals. The report recommends that all uses of PCB—polychlorinated biphenyls—be discontinued, except for use in electrical capacitors and transformers. The task force study concludes that current environmental levels do not constitute an imminent hazard to health, but that the effects of long-term exposure to PCBs are largely unknown. In conjunction with the issuance of the report, the EPA has announced that it will restrict the discharge of all industrial effluents of PCBs, so that levels of PCBs in rivers and lakes will not exceed 0.01 parts per billion.

Steel Cans Containing Recycled Metal Great for Some People, Headache to Others. The steel industry guarantees that all steel cans produced in this country now contain at least 25 percent recycled material. An estimated 2 1/2 billion steel cans will be reclaimed this year in 22 cities. Beer wholesalers, however, have mixed emotions about getting involved in recycling cans and bottles. Some of them are going along with citizens bringing back empty containers, but a significant number are against the idea. The beer distributors feel that redeeming empties places a financial drain on their businesses. One wholesaler reported that running a can reclamation program cost him \$60 per day. The distributors agree that they would prefer to see municipal governments create reclamation programs and get the burden off their back.

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