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Ban urged on use of industrial chemical

Associated Press

Duluth, Minn.
The chief of the National Water Quality Laboratory says an interstate task force has recommended a near-total national ban on the use of one type of toxic industrial chemical.

Dr. Donald Mount, chairman of the Lake Michigan Toxic Substances Committee with representatives from Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and the federal government, said the committee has recommended to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that the chemical — known as PCBS — be limited to "essential uses."

Dr. James Allen, a University of Wisconsin pathologist, has conducted research that he says establishes that the chemical can cause birth defects or prevent reproduction in fish, birds and mammals. He said there is some evidence that they may have similar effects on humans.

Mount said he made the recommendation verbally to Francis Mayo, the agency's regional director, at a meeting in Chicago in late May.

PCBs are a group of chemical compounds used in many industrial processes as a hydraulic fluid, heat transfer fluid and electrical insulators. It also is the only U.S. producer.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has said the PCB levels in Lake Michigan are "alarming" and says it also will push for a ban.

PCBs have been found recently in Minnesota in fish taken from Lake Pepin and Lake Superior.

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