PCB Labeling Law Too Lax, MUCC Spokesman Says

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Proposed state labeling requirements for toxic PCBs are too lax, a spokesman for a conservation group said Wednesday.

Wayne Schmidt of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs told a Department of Natural Resources public hearing that labeling rules being considered as part of a PCB regulation package cover too few products, and contain too few safeguards.

Industry representatives, meanwhile, begged the state to keep paperwork to a minimum when they implement a new law that takes effect April 1, 1977.

The law calls for progressive reduction of the amount of polychlorinated biphenyls that can be manufactured, sold, or used in Michigan. The DNR is trying to come up with rules to help implement the law.

PCBs, chemicals which have tainted fish in Lake Michigan and are considered toxic and environmentally harmful, are manufactured in this country solely by the Monsanto Chemical Co., according to the DNR. The chemicals are used in a variety of household products, electrical transformers and capacitors, and in paper production.

The rules under consideration require disposal of PCBs in approved landfills or incinerators. However, no such disposal facilities have been designated by the state yet.

The rules also require companies to file a notice of intent to use PCBs along with annual reports on the use of the substance, and require PCB or or PCB-containing products sold in Michigan to bear labels noting the content, describing the chemical as an environmental contaminant and warning against contact.

"The labeling requirements should be more stringent," said Schmidt. He said the requirements also should apply to existing electrical transformers built before the law's effective date.

"This will eliminate a frantic record search at the time of an accident to determine if the leaking material is PCB," Schmidt said.

Of the wording of the warning labels, he suggested the labels should include an emergency telephone number for contacting the DNR in case of accidents. He argued that such accidents could occur outside of the industrial setting, and said the public "doesn't know how to handle it."

Roy Vorhees, manager of environmental control and safety engineering for Chrysler Corp., claimed the proposed rules involve too much repetitive paperwork.

He also asked the state to provide a list of licensed landfills and incinerators for PCB disposal — once such a list is compiled — to help industry comply with the new law.

George Graff of the Michigan State Chamber of Commerce said the rules are fairly good, but urged the DNR to adopt a standardized warning label, possibly similar to the type now used in the capacitor-transformer industry, to avoid standards that conflict with those of other states.

He also urged the DNR "to carefully consider the amount of paperwork that will be involved."

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