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*N. Carolina
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N.C. Officials Say Tougher Rules Will Deter Chemical Dumping

Associated Press

RALEIGH — State officials say tighter regulations governing handling of hazardous chemicals will help prevent intentional dumping of toxic wastes.

Authorities believe thousands of gallons of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), a substance known to cause cancer in mice and illness in humans, were deliberately dumped along 250 miles of North Carolina highways during recent weeks. It is the most blatant violation of environmental protection laws encountered by state officials.

Robert Carter, head of the water quality branch of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources, said nine areas covering 13 counties were affected.

Carter said lab tests are being conducted to determine the chemical concentration in each area to decide how to treat the soil. Officials then will decide whether to leave the chemicals in the soil, cover the spill sites or remove the contaminated soil.

Carter said he expected test results by Monday.

The public health division of the human resources department is adopting procedures for keeping track of dangerous and toxic chemicals from manufacturing to final disposal.

Carter said the regulations will make it easier to

find out what has happened to hazardous chemicals produced or used in the state.

However, while the regulations will make it difficult for a North Carolina company to dump chemicals along the highway, they will not affect any such action by an out-of-state firm.

Authorities have speculated the chemicals may have been discharged along the highways because the cost of legally disposing of the material is expensive. Production of the chemical, used as insulation in electrical transformers and capacitors, was suspended last year.

The chemical is dangerous to humans because it does not deteriorate, but instead accumulates in the fatty tissue. There are no facilities for disposing of the chemical in North Carolina.

Carter and Martin Hines, director of the epidemiology branch of the human resources department, said the danger of chemical spills is growing because of the number of new substances being developed.

"We know so much more about many chemicals than we did 10 to 15 years ago," Hines said. "At that time we probably didn't know that some of these persistent chemicals were going to pose any kind of problem."

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