

San Francisco, CA
(San Francisco Co.)
Chronicle
(D. 537,621)

SEP 22 1983

Allen's P. C. B Est. 1888

PG&E Memo Shows 100 PCB Leaks

By H. C. Reza

A San Francisco community group released an internal memo of Pacific Gas & Electric Co. yesterday that listed 100 leaking transformers filled with toxic PCB.

Aides to Mayor Dianne Feinstein and PG&E played down the report.

The San Francisco Organizing Project, a community action group, released an internal PG&E report written this summer that identified 100 downtown locations where electrical transformers have leaked the highly toxic chemical.

Feinstein asked Phil Day, Emergency Services director, to look into reports of the leaking transformers. Late yesterday afternoon, Day called the leaks minor and said the reports have been overplayed.

"The leaks are not a hazard or danger to anybody's health," he said.

Wray Jacobs, president of the Service Employees International Union Local 87 and a representative for the San Francisco Organizing Project, reacted angrily to Day's claim.

"Day is not qualified to say what is or isn't hazardous. We're tired of city officials taking the company line in matters that involve PG&E," said Jacobs. "And you can't trust PG&E."

Virgil Rose, superintendent of electricity for PG&E's San Francisco office, said the number of leaks have been reduced to fewer than 50 since data for the leaked report were compiled in April. He confirmed that the report released by the community group was an internal PG&E memo.

Rose said U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations require the utility to inspect PCB-filled transformers four times a year and record their findings. He called the inspections and reports "routine" because they are made every three months.

"Right now we have about 50 locations that have minor leaks. A leak as defined in the report could mean anything from a soil spot on the transformer case to a puddle on the floor," said Rose. "Most of the leaks refer to soil spots."

In cases where leaks form a puddle on the floor of the transformer vaults, Rose said the spill is cleaned up and the leak sealed with an epoxy compound. The leaky transformer is eventually replaced with a new one that does not contain PCB.

Rose said that as of yesterday, the utility had identified five locations where PCB leaks have formed a puddle. He added that there are 839 PCB-filled transformers in San Francisco and 144 in Oakland that PG&E hopes to replace within four years.

PG&E said most of the transformers in San Francisco are in the downtown area east of Van Ness Avenue — and that one of the leaky transformers is atop the company's 32-story building.

San Rafael, CA
(Marin Co.)
Independent Journal
(Cir. 6xW. 45,355)

SEP 6 1983

Allen's P. C. B Est. 1888

High cost of replacing PCBs

MIAMI (AP) — Florida Power & Light Co. plans to spend more than \$15 million over five years to replace hundreds of South Florida transformers containing toxic PCBs, the company announced.

"We don't agree that PCBs are a big problem," company spokesman Stacey Shaw said Monday. "But there's a lot of public concern. Sometimes it's better to go ahead and get rid of the problem rather than fight public understanding."

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, are a group of 219 toxic chemicals that concentrate in fat tissue and are linked to a variety of health problems, including cancer and birth defects.

The transformer-replacement pro-

gram, scheduled to start next year, comes after dramatic fires in Binghamton, N.Y., and San Francisco that spread PCBs through large office buildings.

The New York building had to be abandoned, and the San Francisco fire resulted in lawsuits seeking millions of dollars in damages.

FP&L will replace 419 huge PCB-bearing transformers in Dade County, 19 in Broward and about 20 in Palm Beach County, Shaw said.

Under federal rules issued last year, the Miami-based utility already is spending \$16 million to replace thousands of PCB-bearing capacitors throughout the state.

Customers will pay the total \$31

million for the two replacement programs to replace capacitors and transformers, but the cost is only a small fraction of the utility's budget and will be spread over five years.

Most of the large transformers containing PCBs are in the basements or under the sidewalks of South Florida's tall buildings. The company has less than 10 in North Florida.

Capacitors contain an average of 1 gallon of PCB-laden oil, while transformers can contain up to 600 gallons.

PCBs once were widely used in electrical equipment because they retard fires.