Oil dumped near river here found to contain PCB



Pollution source?

Stored transformers stand near a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency test hole at Sam Waterman & Sons scrap yard on West 3rd Street. Acting on a local complaint, agency officials have found that oil dumped from the transformers is rich in the chemical pollutant PCB. (Daily News photos)

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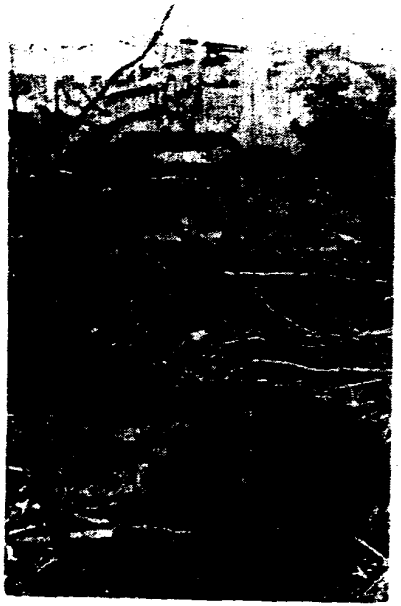

A Minnesota PCA test hole at Sam Weisman & Sons scrap yard, 450 W. 3rd St., has revealed that oil contaminated with the industrial pollutant PCB has sunk four feet into the earth, reaching the water table. Weisman has been ordered to stop dumping the oil.

Mattison said Weisman told officials the Antonson transformers come to his yard with the oil already drained, but that NSP has until recently shipped them with oil still inside. Weisman dumps the oil before salvaging the machines for copper and other metals.

NSP District Manager Thomas Jepson today officially denied the company has shipped transformers with Askarel to Weisman or any other dealer since PCB awareness began in 1970.

"There are two kinds of insulating liquids used in electrical apparatus. All such equipment that contains Askarel is shipped to Minneapolis [illegible] and then to [illegible] for [illegible]," Jepson said.

"We haven't sold anything to Weisman or anybody else since 1970 that contains oil with PCB. We have complete records including serial numbers of sales," he said.

Jepson noted a quantity of obsolete distribution transformers were shipped to Weisman from NSP "within the last 10 days."

Mattison said Dan Pelowski, in charge of shipping NSP transformers, told officials he delivered the machines to Weisman but considered the NSP obligation over after delivery.

Mattison said Pelowski "did not deny the allegation" the transformers contained oil, but noted the possibility exists it was of the type not containing PCBs.

Mattison noted Weisman had 37 transformers at his scrap yard Wednesday, and that NSP and Weisman are working together to clean up the polluted earth and store it in a plastic-lined dike at the yard until a means of disposal can be found.

He said "whatever action is necessary" will be taken to stop the dumping, but added Weisman has agreed to halt the practice.

"I suspect he will stop accepting transformers, but that might create another problem with other dealers dumping elsewhere in the countryside," Mattison said.

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Oil dumped

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"Our problem right now is that we have dug four feet through oil - saturated soil and reached the water table. If we have contamination of the water table there is a violation of state regulations. In fact, just to dump the oil is a state violation," he said.

Mattison said the possibility exists there could be action against responsible parties, but that the conflicting reports given the MPCA by Weisman and NSP officials leave it unclear for the present who could be charged.

He said agency officials are now investigating to determine the actual source of the transformers containing Askarel.

"Actually, Weisman shouldn't even be getting it. The utility using the transformer should be responsible for disposing of it. The best thing to do is ship it back to the manufacturer," Mattison said.

File PCB Minnesota

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