Laws To Monitor Toxic Chemicals

August 13, 1979

RALEIGH (AP) — State officials say the introduction of tighter regulations governing the handling of hazardous chemicals will be a major step toward ensuring that incidents of dumping of toxic wastes into the environment [illegible]

Authorities believe thousands of gallons of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), a substance known to cause cancer in mice and illness in humans, was deliberately sprayed along 200 miles of North Carolina highways during recent weeks in the most blatant violations of environmental protection laws encountered by state officials.

The Public Health Division of the state Department of Human Resources is preparing to adopt procedures for keeping track of dangerous and toxic chemicals from the time they are manufactured until their disposal.

Robert Carter, head of the water quality branch of the state Department of Natural Resources, said the regulations will make it easier for authorities to find out what has happened to any hazardous chemical produced, or used, in the state. Carter said the regulations "will not only help us, but will help businesses to legally dispose their chemicals for [illegible] less with tougher audits the process [illegible] of them, how they are handled and how they are to be disposed of."

Once all the regulations are in effect, he said, it will be easier to track down anyone

- State officials have confirmed that [illegible] of highways in nine areas of the state in 12 counties, including Lee and Chatham, have been contaminated during [illegible]

intentionally dumping hazardous substances into the environment because there will be records accounting for the use and disposal of them.

However, officials point out that while the forthcoming regulations would help make it difficult for a company in North Carolina to have dumped thousands of gallons of PCB along the highways, they would not have affected any such action by an out-of-state firm.

Privately, authorities have speculated PCB may have been discharged along the highways because of the cost of disposing of the material in accordance with federal regulations. Production of PCB, used as insulation in electrical transformers and capacitors, was suspended last year.

The substance is particularly dangerous because it does not breakdown and can accumulate in the fatty tissues of animals, including man. There are no facilities for disposing of PCB in North Carolina.

The Tipton: [illegible] Oct. 9

Tighter Laws Planned On Unsafe Chemicals

[redacted]

White Carter said others have said federal regulations regarding disposal of PCB might have provided an incentive for some to illegally dispose of the substance, there are very few companies who likely would risk criminal suit on irresponsible and dangerous act.

Carter also said he was alarmed by information learned [illegible] during the investigation of the PCB dumping.

"We have waste management," Carter said. "We found in this investigation [illegible] eight-eight waste companies who were picking up what they thought were waste oil, but it contained traces of PCB. These people were going to be a convenient threat, and they cooperated so that type operation will be relatively small.

"I have a gut feeling that there are a lot of unscrupulous operators who will have a lot of these chemicals on hand," he said, adding there will be a temptation to get rid of them rather than spending the necessary money for proper [illegible]

Carter and Dr. Martin Rhea, director of the epidemiology branch of the Department of Human Resources, said the dangers of chemical spills, either accidental or deliberate, 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," Rhea said. "At that time we probably didn't know that some of these products or chemicals were going to pose any kind of problem. It was something we had never heard of."

Carter said most of the chemical spills he offers has encountered were accidental or resulted from negligence. Many of them involved the loading or unloading of barges carrying petroleum products, he said.

The General Assembly rewrote the state Solid Waste Management Act during its 1979 session to set up the mechanism for a hazardous waste management program, which will be administered by the solid waste and vector control branch of the Department of Human Resources.

Jerry Perkins, head of that branch, said a 1976 federal law gives states primary responsibility for regulating the handling of hazardous chemicals. The General Assembly instructed the Human Resources Department to develop regulations for control of chemicals, including a system to track the materials from the point of origin to final disposal.

Perkins said the legislation was born out of both the safety standpoint and for the benefit of industry.

He said once regulations, including a list of the kinds of materials covered, can be drawn up other substances standards have been set by the federal government. Perkins said that once the program has been implemented the operating expenses of his agency will double from its current level of $300,000 a year, with some of the money coming from Washington.

MONS 001938