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Firm Phasing Out Toxic Chemicals

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — Monsanto Co. announced Monday it plans to phase out the manufacture of a toxic group of chemicals known as PCBs, which environmentalists contend are threatening public health and the nation's rivers and lakes.

F. J. Fitzgerald, a corporate vice president, said he could not give an exact timetable for the phase-out but "it would be in a planned and orderly manner."

"As soon as we are satisfied that the electrical power supply industry's needs for usable, acceptable alternate dielectric fluids have been met, by whomever, Monsanto will voluntarily shut down its PCB manufacturing unit," Fitzgerald said.

The policy decision will have no effect on Monsanto's employment in the St. Louis area, company spokesman Daniel Bischop told the Banner-News.

"First of all, there are only about two dozen people involved in that manufacture at a plant in Illinois, and secondly, we hope those people will be involved with whatever takes its (PCBs) place," Bischop said, "It's not really a labor-intensive product."

Monsanto is the sole maker of PCB, or polychlorinated biphenyl, which is used primarily as a nonconductor of direct electrical current. The chemical has been a necessary ingredient in most power-generating equipment.

PCBs have been used in manufacturing processes since 1930, but their presence as toxic substances in the environment was not detected until 1966 because they were confused with DDT, with [illegible]ily have a similar chemical structure.

At a conference on PCBs last November in Chicago, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel P. Reed recommended the federal government impose a nearly total ban on the chemicals.

Reed said he was "deeply shocked by the pervasiveness of PCBs; they are literally everywhere." He said exceedingly high levels of PCBs were found in fish from all parts of the country, indicating the nation's rivers and lakes were "in mortal danger."

PCBs have caused liver cancer and reproductive failures in laboratory animals and some workers using the chemicals have complained of allergic reactions, according to federal officials.

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The President h
morning and read a

Advisers had hoped to hold the speech to 30 or 35 minutes. But they agreed the President was right in saying it was better to add extra minutes if needed to make the message clear.

With interruptions for applause, the State of the Union address took 48 minutes to deliver.



'CHILDREN... YOU ARE SEEING YOUR FIRST STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE'

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