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Section C

Russell and Olsen

# State's PCB cleanup concluded

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Four years, three months and nine days after it was discovered that PCB-contaminated oil had been drained along more than 200 miles of rural North Carolina roadsides, the state picked up the last bit of it Tuesday.


Phillips

N.C. Department of Transportation crews went over three miles of roadside and declared they had it all.

"We're finished," said William W. Phillips, assistant to the secretary of the N.C. Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, who oversaw the operation.

The pickup Tuesday concentrated on backtracking over small areas where testing determined the PCB levels were too high after an initial scraping of soil 3 inches deep, Phillips said.

It was on Aug. 3, 1978, that a test of oil spilled in Johnston County showed it was contaminated with high levels of the chemicals, short for polychlorinated biphenyls. Used for years in electrical transformers, along roadsides to keep dust down and for a number of other purposes because of their stable properties, the chemicals were outlawed after they were found to cause cancer in laboratory animals.

An investigation followed the discovery of the chemicals in 14 counties, and three men pleaded guilty to state criminal charges stemming from the incident. They had been hired to dispose of the chemical by Robert E. Ward Jr. of Raleigh, president of Ward's Transformer Company. Ward is being sued for $12.5 million in actual and punitive damages because of the dumping. Ward was convicted on federal charges in the incident.

Tuesday's pickup brought to 241 miles the total length of roadway covered by state crews since the cleanup began Sept. 15. When it was over, 6,440 truckloads of dirt had been carried to a landfill in Afton designed and constructed to hold the contaminated dirt.

The pickup took two weeks less than state officials estimated it would.

All that remains before the landfill can be covered and capped is completion of the pickup of contaminated soil from Fort Bragg, where PCBs also were dumped in 1978. The federal government has given a private contractor until Oct. 27 to complete that cleanup.

Meanwhile Tuesday, seven protesters against the landfill in Warren County filed a formal complaint with the N.C. Highway Patrol, alleging that a state trooper who passed them Monday while on a march from Warrenton to Raleigh nearly ran them over.

Evelyn G. Lowery, wife of the Rev. Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said the group of about 75 was just south of Rolesville on U.S. 401 when a patrol car "going very fast ...swooped by us," nearly hitting them.

She said he then stopped and told them to get off the roadway. Mrs. Lowery said the group was on the shoulder. "He may have been trying to harass or intimidate us," she said. "But whatever the rea-

*See PCB, page 10C*

son, it was life threatening. It was too close for comfort."

Highway Patrol Maj. Glenn D. Russell said he would begin investigating the complaint this morning.

The marchers reached the Saint Matthews Baptist Church, just outside Raleigh on U.S. 401 Monday night, but called off a scheduled march to the Capitol. Instead, they rallied Tuesday night the New Bethel Church of Christ on Poole Road in Raleigh.

The protesters contend the landfill is unsafe and was placed in Warren County because its residents are poor and politically weak and because most are black.

The state has maintained that the landfill is the safest and most feasible method for disposing of the chemicals, and that the Warren County site was chosen because it was judged to be the best location based on a number of criteria.

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