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The Environmental Protection Agency ordered a nationwide ban on sale of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), to start July 1, 1979. PCBs, widely used since the 1930s as a coolant and ingredient in paints, inks, plastics, lubricants, and preservatives, accumulates in human tissue and is suspected of causing cancer, birth defects, and nerve disorders. It is the first non-pesticide to be placed under a general EPA ban, and the nation's only producer, Monsanto Corp., had voluntarily agreed to phase out production.