

GENERAL ELECTRIC

BERKSHIRE EAGLE - NOON RELEASE - JAN. 28, 1976 J. T. Batty 494-3752
STATEMENT ON PITTSFIELD GE SEARCH FOR PCB ALTERNATE FOR TRANSFORMER USE

There has been considerable discussion on the use of PCB dielectric insulating fluids in certain special-application transformers where requirements are for maximum safety and nonflammability.

The Large Transformer Business Division has been searching for some 30 years for a fully-equivalent substitute for PCBs for use in closed-system transformers. Originally the incentive was economic because the cost of PCB is 10 times the cost of normally-used transformer oil.

Since the late 1960s, when the question was first raised about the possibility of PCB hazards to the environment, we have increased our efforts to find a suitable replacement. To date no substitute has been found which has the total characteristics of PCB in terms of electrical insulating and heat-transfer qualities as well as nonflammability -- essential characteristics for use in transformers located in buildings or commuter rail cars where fire could threaten large numbers of human lives.

Several materials now being tested by GE differ in varying degrees from PCB in one or more of the characteristics listed above. These tested materials include silicone oil, manufactured by both General Electric and Dow Corning Corporation, and other liquids. Some of these materials are more costly than PCB dielectric insulating fluids and also adversely affect the efficiency of current transformer designs.

We cannot yet fully accept some statements made by other companies extolling the virtues of certain substitutes for PCB insulating fluids. GE has a history of technological leadership and concern for meeting the existing safety standards for safety in our products. We will not risk this reputation by offering any product that does not meet existing safety

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standards of government and the industry.

It is our intent to phase out the use of PCBs just as soon as we can develop or identify a mutually acceptable substitute. This can only be done after the following have occurred.

1. We are satisfied that the selected substitute meets the existing industry, government and any other safety standards, as well as our customers' requirements.
2. We have determined with the best possible assurance that we are not swapping one kind of pollutant for another.
3. We have completed any development work necessary to design products to accommodate to the characteristics of any substitute chosen, including the electrical insulating and heat-transfer qualities of any new insulating material used.

In the meantime, discharge of PCBs to the environment from current use in the Pittsfield plant remains in accordance with our agreements with state and federal agencies. Amounts reaching the east branch of the Housatonic River average less than four ounces a day out of a total daily discharge from the plant of 40 million pounds of process water. To the best of our knowledge, practically all of this is due to a residual problem derived from 40 years of use of PCBs, rigid control systems tightly regulate current use of PCB insulating fluids.

There is every reason to believe that the Housatonic River also receives PCBs from various non-GE sources. It should be remembered that prior to 1970, PCBs were used widely by other than manufacturers of closed electrical systems. PCBs then had application

PRESS RELATIONS

PITTSFIELD, MASS.
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in such products as paints, sealants, specialty inks, paper coatings, carbonless carbon paper, plastics and hydraulic fluids.

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