NEWS

Monsanto

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MONSANTO TO PHASE OUT PRODUCTION OF PCBs; DEVELOPING ALTERNATES

ST. LOUIS, January 26, 1976 -- Monsanto Company today announced that it has informed its U.S. capacitor and transformer industry customers and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that it intends to eventually phase out the production of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) dielectric insulating fluids. Dielectric fluids are non-conductors of direct electrical current and are necessary ingredients in most power generating equipment.

In making the announcement, F. J. Fitzgerald, a corporate vice president and managing director of Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co., said it is too early to put an exact timetable on the phase out but that it would be in a planned and orderly manner. Mr. Fitzgerald added, "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."

In describing Monsanto's actions to date, aimed at restricting the further entry of PCBs into the environment, Mr. Fitzgerald emphasized three significant steps that have already been taken.

"1. Monsanto began restricting the use of its PCBs solely to closed electrical systems, for which no viable alternates existed, back in 1970. It should be noted that this voluntary program, which was fully implemented prior to the completion of the study done on PCBs

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by a Federal Interdepartmental Task Force in 1972, reduced Monsanto's annual PCB production by over 50 per cent.

"2. In our manufacturing area, we instituted controls, unique in the industrial chemicals industry, to minimize losses to the environment. We also installed a special high-temperature incinerator which completely destroys waste PCB by burning at temperatures above 2,000 degrees F. This service and other technical assistance is available to our customers on a continuing basis.

"3. Monsanto has been working for a number of years on non-PCB replacement products. These materials, designed to replace PCB fluids in capacitors and transformers, are currently being evaluated by electrical manufacturers in the United States."

Mr. Fitzgerald added that while the PCB issue is a difficult one to handle, the difficulty does not now, nor will it in the future, stem from any lack of effort or cooperation on the part of Monsanto. "The problems that we face collectively are rooted in the unique fire resistant and dielectric characteristics of PCBs, and the irreplaceable role they have played in electrical and industrial applications for the past 45 years," he said.

"The challenge is to replace them in an orderly manner without creating another hazard of equal or potentially greater consequences, while at the same time avoiding serious power and transportation disruptions. This is our goal. In the interim, we will continue to work with industry and government to ensure that the restrictive measures and controls we implemented in the early 1970s remain in force and are diligently pursued."

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