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Monsanto Refutes Cancer Claims

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — Monsanto Co. says so far it has found no cases of either malignant melanoma or cancer of the pancreas among current or former employees who work with polychlorinated biphenyls, better known as PCBs.

The company said Thursday it plans to continue for 12 to 18 months its study of the health records of employees at its Saugee, Ill., manufacturing plant. Records of more than 300 employees have been checked so far.

The review was prompted by a recent Mobil Oil Corp. study that reported three cases of malignant melanoma, which is a cancerous tumor, and two cases of pancreatic cancer among 72 employees who handled electrical insulating fluids containing PCB at a Mobil plant in New Jersey.

"The fact that we have found no cases of either of these cancers casts strong doubt that the findings of the Mobil study were in fact related to PCB," said Dr. George Roush, director of Monsanto's medical and environmental health depart-

ment.

Roush emphasized the Monsanto study is incomplete and findings are tentative.

He also said the review found a higher incidence of lung cancer among employees in the PCB unit than the average according to National Cancer Institute statistics.

However, Roush said, "to date, the evidence developed from this preliminary study would suggest that the cases of lung cancer are not PCB dose-response related."

Monsanto, the only U.S. manufacturer of PCBs, announced in January it will phase out production of the chemical, traces of which have been found in every major waterway in the nation. The House of Representatives last month voted to ban production of PCBs within two years.