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METRO BEAT

Waukegan outboard plant cited in PCB discharge

By Gary Wisby

The state Environmental Protection Agency Thursday cited a Waukegan outboard motor plant believed to be polluting Lake Michigan with PCB.

In its first action to control discharge of the poisonous chemical, the state notified Johnson Outboards, a division of Outboard Marine Corp., that up to 2,000 times the permissible level of PCB oil is seeping into the lake from its plant.

PCB—polychlorinated biphenyl—is a heat-resistant lubricant for machinery that has caused liver cancer and miscarriages in laboratory animals and has been showing up increasingly in Lake Michigan game fish.

Carl Ruesch, vice president and division manager for Johnson Outboards, said the company will file a cleanup plan with the EPA within the 21 days allowed.

Meanwhile, the deputy administrator of the U.S. EPA said in New York that U.S. Steel Corp.'s Gary Works plant has "a record of environmental recalcitrance second to none." John R. Quarles said the plant repeatedly stalled implementation of a 1965 agreement to close its open-hearth furnaces and negotiated in bad faith on discharge standards for waste poured into Lake Michigan.

Earl Mallick, U.S. Steel vice president for environmental affairs, responded that the company has spent almost $1 billion on pollution control facilities nationwide. "U.S. Steel does not always agree with EPA decisions," he added. "And when this situation occurs and the EPA has not compromised its position, we have been forced to seek recourse through the courts."

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