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EPA, UTILITIES, MANUFACTURERS JOIN FORCES TO PHASE OUT USE OF PCB – the toxic polychlorinated biphenyl liquid used as an insulating fluid in fire-resistant power transformers and in capacitors. Specialists with the Environmental Protection Agency met last month with the manufacturers of transformers and capacitors which use the liquid in their products and with representatives of Edison Electric Institute and several individual utilities to work out a policy for phasing out the use of the liquid and for safely disposing of the substance in obsolete equipment. An EEI spokesman said late last week that the institute was in the process of naming a task force of utility men to work with EPA on the PCB problem.

In recent months Dow Corning has announced a less-hazardous substitute for PCB for possible use in fire-resistant transformers and Dow Chemical has announced that it, in cooperation with McGraw-Edison, will be ready this year to introduce a less-hazardous substitute for use in insulating capacitors. EPA calls PCB a "serious threat to human health and to the environment," saying that it will not readily degrade and adding that in tests with laboratory animals PCB was found to cause reproductive failures, gastric disorders, skin lesions and tumors in mammals.

An EPA source said the meeting with the utility group "was encouraging in every way" and indicated the agency looked forward to a cooperative effort with the utilities and the manufacturers in formulating guidelines for use of PCB in present equipment and for finding a substitute for PCB.

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