Q: Recent news reports have focused public attention on the problem of waste PCBs being introduced into the environment. Is Monsanto aware of this problem and what steps has the Company taken to prevent the accidental release of PCBs.

A: Since the early 1970s, when scientific investigations first confirmed the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the U.S. environment and long before information regarding the potential impact of this contamination was determined, Monsanto voluntarily began its program of terminating all sales of PCBs to open applications -- those which could likely result in losses to the environment.

PCBs were first commercially produced in the U.S. in 1929. Their unique properties soon led to their use in a wide range of products including surface coatings, carbonless copy papers, printing inks, plasticizers and special adhesives.

By late 1972 Monsanto, the only domestic producer of PCBs, had fully implemented its restricted sales program on the materials. Since then, Monsanto has marketed PCBs only as dielectric fluid for use in "closed" or sealed electrical systems such as transformers and capacitors.

In 1972, Monsanto's voluntary program was reviewed by a Federal Interdepartment Task Force (consisting of representatives from the Office of Science and Technology, Council on Environmental Quality,

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Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, the EPA, HEW and the Department of the Interior). The Federal Task Force Report, which is a matter of public record, supported and endorsed Monsanto's program.

To assure that organizations within the electrical industry were aware of the necessity of handling PCB dielectric materials in an environmentally safe manner, the American National Standards Institute Committee C-107 was formed. Composed of representatives of the transformer and capacitor industries, utilities and governmental agencies, the committee promulgated its guidelines in January 1974.

When Monsanto ships PCBs, a multi-lingual warning label is affixed to each package giving a brief description of the nature of the material and appropriate actions to be taken in the event of a spill or leak. A similar warning appears on each Monsanto invoice and bill of lading for products containing PCBs.

Despite these positive steps, it became apparent that the persistent nature of these compounds was being perceived by society as a greater risk than that presented by using less fire resistant fluids in electrical apparatus. It was at this point that Monsanto made the decision to eventually phase out PCB production for even these sealed dielectric uses.

Monsanto has announced that by October 31, 1977, it will complete distribution of all inventories and withdraw completely from the market as the principal supplier of PCB dielectric insulating fluids to the electrical power supply industry.

While guidelines for the electrical industry have drastically reduced the possibility of new PCBs entering the environment, it is known that certain PCBs will persist in the environment for a considerable period of time. A growing number of researchers armed with advance knowledge of what to look for and equipped with improved, high sophisticated analytical tools are likely to continue to find areas where PCBs have concentrated in the environment.

Q: How are PCBs disposed of when they can be isolated in the environment?

A: PCB liquids alone or mixed with other oils or solvents can be destroyed by high temperature incinerators. Firebox temperatures above 2000°F are required to completely destroy PCB compounds. Solid materials and soil, contaminated with PCBs can be disposed of in specially designated scientific landfills. A list of such facilities approved for the disposal of PCBs is provided in the American National Standards Institute's C-107 Committee Report. As of January 1974 there were at least five locations offering incinerator services in the U.S. to destroy PCB liquids. Scientific landfills for the disposal of solids and PCB-soaked compounds are available in California, New York, Texas, Kentucky, Illinois and Idaho.

A complete listing of all PCB disposal facilities and services is available from the American National Standards Institute, Inc., 1430 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10018.

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Q: How can I tell if waste oil has been contaminated with PCBs?

A: Analysis of sample materials to determine whether PCBs are present requires a well equipped analytical laboratory and often the use of an extremely sensitive device known as a gas chromatograph. Specific procedures should also be followed to assure that accurate samplings are made.

Monsanto is not staffed to handle outside requests of this type. In addition to various federal and state facilities, several independent laboratories claim to have this capability. Monsanto cannot guarantee the proficiency of these outside laboratories for measuring PCBs in dielectric fluids. However, these laboratories, including Analytical Biochemistry Laboratories, P. O. Box 1097, Columbia, Missouri 65201, and WARF (Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation), P. O. Box 2599, Madison, Wisconsin 53701, have provided similar analytical services to other PCB users.

Concerns over possible PCB discharges or contamination should be directed to your local state department of environmental quality or the nearest regional office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Individuals at these offices are aware of the proper procedures to follow in obtaining samples of suspect materials. They also should be consulted in determining the best method for disposal of any waste materials found to contain PCBs.

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