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EPA Schedules Meeting On PCB's for Chicago

Environmental Protection Agency, in cooperation with several other Federal agencies, will host a national conference to discuss environmental contamination by polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a group of industrial chemicals, November 19-21 at the Pick Congress hotel in Chicago.

Department of Health, Education & Welfare will moderate a special session the

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EPA Schedules

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first day of the conference devoted to recent information about health aspects of exposure to PCBs.

"PCBs have long been a grave matter of concern for EPA and all people who work for a clean environment," Russell E. Train, EPA chief says.

"Action taken in 1972 was expected to reduce PCB discharges to the environment, but recent evidence indicates the continued presence of high concentrations of these chemicals in fish in several of our nation's waterways. This conference will help EPA clarify the feasibility of further steps to help reduce PCB contamination of the environment."

PCBs have been widely used by industry over the past forty years, most commonly as insulating fluid in certain electrical transformers and capacitors. PCBs have also been used as hydraulic fluids, lubricants, heat transfer fluids, and plasticizers in adhesives, sealants, printing inks, coatings, and waxes.

Ingestion of sufficient amounts of PCBs has been found to cause reproductive defects and death in fish, birds, and mammals. High PCB levels have been detected in salmon, striped bass, and other fish in the Great Lakes, the upper Mississippi River, Southern California, the Gulf of Mexico, and in several waterways in New York state.

Mr. Train, keynote speaker at the conference, says that the Chicago meeting "will provide the opportunity for presentation of new information and previously neglected information concerning the toxicity of these chemicals. It will also provide a platform for interested parties to make suggestions concerning the PCB problem."

The effectiveness of steps taken since 1972 to reduce environmental contamination by PCBs will also be discussed. A Federal government task force that year issued a report recommending discontinuance of all PCB uses other than use in electrical transformers and capacitors.

Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Company, the sole US producer, agreed in 1972 to limit its PCB sales to manufacturers of these "closed" electrical systems.

Because of persistently high PCB levels being found today in fish, EPA is attempting to discover if PCB use is widespread in applications other than closed systems. PCBs produced in foreign countries but sold to US firms may be contributing to the problem.

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