NEWS

Monsanto

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PRELIMINARY INFORMATIOI
FROM ONGOING PCB STUDY
RELEASED BY MONSANTO

ST. LOUIS, Sept. 2 -- Monsanto Company today reported that it has found no cases of either malignant melanoma or pancreatic cancer among current or former employes engaged in the production of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at its U.S. manufacturing site.

This information, announced by George Roush, M.D., director of the company's medical and environmental health department, was released in response to questions from the news media, prompted by a recent Mobil Oil Corporation study which reported finding three cases of melanoma and two cases of pancreatic cancer among 72 employes who had been exposed to a PCB product while working at a Mobil plant in New Jersey.

Dr. Roush said that if either melanoma or pancreatic cancer were related to PCB exposure as the Mobil report suggested, then it would follow that these malignancies would have also been seen in a worker population over four times as large. "In my opinion," he said, "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."

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The Monsanto information was based on a review of the records of more than 300 current and former employes who have been identified as having worked in the PCB production unit of the company's William G. Krummrich plant, dating back to 1936 when that unit first became operational. Within this population, Monsanto has been able to identify 50 former employes who have died. A review of death certificates has been included in the work done to date. The Krummrich plant, located just south of East St. Louis at Sauget, Ill., is the sole U.S. manufacturing site for Monsanto-produced PCB products.

Dr. Roush said that this information was extracted from an ongoing epidemiological study that will require another 12 to 18 months to complete. "We would not normally release clinical or medical data from a still-ongoing study," he continued, "without first subjecting it to full scientific investigation and review." He emphasized that, while some facts and tentative findings have surfaced, much additional work needs to be done before a final assessment can be made.

"With these qualifications in mind, and because Monsanto is aware of the obvious concern that has been generated by the Mobil report, the company is releasing the following additional information, some of which I must re-emphasize is very preliminary," Dr. Roush said. "We have not seen a significant excess of cancer in the review of death certificates.

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"The incidence of lung cancer among deceased former employes who worked in the PCB unit during any portion of their Monsanto employment was higher than the rate for the general U.S. population. This study covers a 25 year period and during this time there were seven cases of lung cancer observed in a review of the 50 death certificates compared with 2.7 that would have been expected based on a U.S. male population for the year 1969 compiled by the National Cancer Institute," he said.

Dr. Roush cautioned against trying to reach any firm conclusions from this raw information explaining that it has not even been corrected for age. "This correction factor, alone, could make a significant difference," he added. He also pointed out that every epidemiological study he has ever seen showed an excess in some cause of death because it includes a study of mortality.

"The findings to date may be significant and they may well not be. What is needed now is a controlled study of the lung cancer cases," he said.

"For example, and while it may be difficult to reconstruct, we hope to determine the smoking habits of these workers and, if possible their prior and post Monsanto work experience and exposure. We would also hope to compare this incidence of lung cancer with the lung cancer mortality rate for the East St. Louis area. We do know that three of the seven workers who died of lung cancer, worked in the PCB unit for less than three months. There are a lot of

things we still don't know and the answers could be extremely significant, especially with a sample this small.

"Another tentative finding we have seen is that our PCB workers lived longer than the national average.

"To date, the evidence developed from this preliminary study would suggest that the cases of lung cancer are not PCB dose-response related," he said. Dr. Roush added that Monsanto's extensive long-term feeding studies with animals would further indicate that PCBs are not carcinogenic.

The Monsanto official said that the study will be transmitted to appropriate Federal agencies and published upon completion.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Because of increasing environmental concerns, Monsanto announced last January its intentions to voluntarily cease all PCB production, as soon as possible, consistent with the ability of transformer and capacitor manufacturers to convert to viable alternate dielectric fluids.

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