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Prof. to Hear State GE Pollution Case

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—A Columbia University Law School professor will preside as hearing judge in the complaint brought by the state against the General Electric Co. for alleged pollution of the Hudson River.

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Prof. Abraham D. Sofaer will begin hearings Oct. 6 on the state complaint that GE plants in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls are discharging excessive amounts of polychlorinated byphenyls into the river, state Environmental Conservation Commissioner Ogden Reid said in a statement released Wednesday.

The complaint argues that the PCB discharges violate state water standards and the state Fish and Wildlife Law.

The PCB chemical is used in the manufacture of capacitators, transformers and other electrical equipment. Federal officials have said PCB is fatal to fish eggs, may cause cancer in rats and can cause hair and weight loss in monkeys. Its effects on humans are still being studied.

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Reid has said the PCB discharges may have caused irreparable damage to the Hudson. He has warned New Yorkers against eating any fish that come from the river.

State officials said the GE plants presently discharge about five pounds of PCB per day into the Hudson, although the company has dumped as much as 80 pounds of PCB per day into the river.

The state is seeking an abatement order requiring GE to reduce the discharges to two pounds per day by the end of this year and to end the discharges by Sept. 30, 1976.

A GE spokesman has said a reduction of PCB discharges to the levels proposed by the state was impractical. "At this point in time, we know of no feasible method of achieving such a goal," the spokesman said.

The state complaint also seeks civil penalties and asks that the company be required to post a $3 million compliance bond. It also requires GE to take steps to restore the Hudson and to eliminate contamination of the river caused by past company practices.

Sofaer, 37, has been a member of the Columbia Law School faculty since 1969. He has served as assistant U.S. Attorney for the southern district of New York and also served on several Bar Association committees.

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