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PCB Bill Wins Committee Okay

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A bill to eliminate almost completely the manufacture, sale and use of the toxic chemical PCB in Michigan has won approval in a key Senate committee.

The measure was reported Thursday to the full Senate on a 4-0 vote in the Senate Conservation Committee. The bill already has passed the House and environmentalists said the measure approved in the Senate is comparable.

PCB, a nearly indestructible compound, has resulted in the death and reproductive failure of many Michigan fish, fish-eating birds and animals. High concentrations of PCBs — polychlorinated biphenyls — have been found in many fish tested in the Great Lakes.

PCB also has been detected in rain and snow, and is believed to make humans and animals ill. Symptoms may be tumors, lesions, baldness, liver disturbances and visual and reproductive problems.

The bill reduces, over a three-year period, the concentration of PCB that an item could contain. Beginning in July, no item could contain more than 250,000 parts per million (ppm), and that is reduced to 1,000 next January and to 100 in January 1978.

The director of the Department of Natural Resources could order even lower concentrations if the director decides the bill is not strict enough to safeguard the public.

However, PCB or an item containing PCB could be sold in the state if used in a closed system, such as a transformer or capacitor. It also is used in hydraulic and heat transfer fluids, insulation, adhesives, laminates, textile coverings and waxes.

When adequate substitutes become available, they would have to be used.

The bill also says that beginning in July, manufacture or sale of an item containing more than 100 ppm of PCB is prohibited unless the DNR is told. The item would have to labeled to show it contains PCB.

Violation of the new law would be a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for up to 30 days and fine of up to $10,000 for each violation.

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