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## Toxic PCBs Spark Alarm

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WASHINGTON — Federal officials, alarmed by dangerously high levels of a group of toxic chemicals found in fish, may act to restrict the chemicals' use. But they will not ban them as other countries have done.

The chemicals are called polychlorinated biphenyls — PCBs. They have been widely used since 1899 in manufacturing processes such as the making of electrical transformers. PCBs now appear to be widespread in the nation's lakes and rivers where the manufacturers dump them.

Earlier this month consumers were warned not to eat striped bass from the Hudson River in New York or salmon from Lake Ontario because of unsafe levels of PCBs. Also fish brought from Wisconsin

to stock lakes in St. Louis, Mo., were found to be contaminated with 10 times the safe level of PCBs. All fish in five lakes in the city had to be destroyed.

In May the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) seized 124,812 15.5-ounce cans of coho salmon from Lake Michigan and 8480 frozen Lake Michigan salmon because of PCBs contamination.

Although PCBs have caused liver damage in test animals, the potential long-range threat to humans is not known. PCBs build up in the human body. The only clinical experience came in 1968 when 1000 Japanese ate rice oil contaminated by PCBs and developed darkened skins, eye discharge and severe acne. Sixteen deaths from that incident have been attributed to PCBs, but this has not been proven.

Russell E. Train, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) called a meeting for later today of his top aides to set public policy.