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# Some PCBs made at NCR

By Bonnie Russ
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NCR and its PCBs could be almost anywhere . . . in recycled paper and cardboard, that is.

Part of the company's carbonless carbon paper — made with PCBs until this Spring — has ended up in several recycled food containers tested by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

NCR no longer makes the product with the poisonous chemical but it never recalled the product.

The new method is "completely harmless" and during the 15 years NCR made the paper with PCBs it ran many tests to make sure it was safe, Charles Truax, company public relations director, said yesterday.

"At the time (of the changeover) there wasn't sufficient evidence to justify the issuance of warnings or recalls," Truax said.

But FDA officials say they don't know how many cardboard containers — generally made out of recycled paper — could contain PCBs.

High levels of the PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) were found in 9 out of 28 different products made by the same manufacture, the FDA reported.

One of the products was a box of shredded wheat made by the Sunshine Biscuit, Inc. The firm's Dayton plant — and several others across the nation — made shredded wheat.

During the recycling process the PCBs apparently break down and enter the product, possibly poisoning the food, the FDA said.

"In this particular one it apparently came from a PCB-treated carbonless duplicating paper," the FDA spokesman said yesterday in Washington.

NCR HAD a patent on the process and discontinued use of the PCBs after the supplier warned the company last year, "there was some suspicion it might create a problem," Truax said.

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"As I understand it, at the time NCR learned there was a possible problem that's really all they knew.

"There was very little known about it (PCBs) . . . they couldn't see, apparently, that its use in paper would create any problem," he said.

And because so little was known about PCBs and because no one knew the chemical would break down in recycling, the product was not recalled, both Truax and the FDA spokesman said.

NCR didn't think "anybody was ever endangered by it because they didn't eat the paper, you see," Truax said.

"At the time . . . certainly they (NCR!) didn't know anything about its turning up in food packages and that kind of thing," Truax said.

The FDA spokesman wouldn't say, though, where the boxes were made.

"I'm not sure where either the biscuits were made or where the boxes were obtained from but they were traced back to the manufacturer and the problem was corrected," he said.

And while the spokesman said the chemical came from carbonless carbon paper, he was reluctant to pin the source to NCR.

"Well that's (NCR) just one of the areas. It could have been (NCR's paper). We don't know where they came from," he said.

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AND TRUAX, too, said NCR should not be blamed for all the PCBs found from now on in recycled paper.

PCBs have been widely used in manufacturing since the 1930's, Truax said, and at least three other companies in the United States and several abroad make the carbon-less paper.

NCR has made the duplicating paper since the 1950's, had independent researchers test it for toxicity and never found any polluting problems with it, Truax said.

And the FDA, too, admits PCB's and their effects are foreign to them.

JUST BECAUSE the PCB's have been found in 9 boxes, that doesn't mean paper recycling should be abandoned, he said.

Most environmentalists, he said, would still agree recycling is a good way to conserve resources and would recommend people sort out newspapers from trash.

Has an order gone out from the FDA to recycling plants to beware of the PCB treated paper?

"There is always a caution for the type of material that's used (in recycling)," the spokesman said. "But until the material is tested we have no way of knowing what's in there."

# PCB foods kept secret

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration yesterday refused to identify by brand name the full list of packaged foods in which it found the DDT-like chemical, PCBs.

The agency said Monday it found the chemical at levels of up to four times federal guidelines in shredded wheat, spaghetti dinners, corn meal, mixed baby cereal, grits, noodle dinners and pancake mix. But the only brand name it released then was that of Sunshine shredded wheat.

Nabisco, meanwhile, said no PCBs had been detected in its shredded wheat. The firm said PCBs had been found in its packages, but at a level "well below the acceptable safe limits."

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