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State warns against eating too many PCB tainted lake fish

Menus should contain only one serving per week of large lake trout or coho salmon, the Wisconsin department of health has warned.

PCB (polychlorinated diphenyls) have been found in larger concentrations than is considered safe for human consumption in lake trout and salmon over 24 inches long.

According to Dr. George Handy, head of the health department, the PCB is ingested through the fish's system and stored in the fat as it gets larger. Because of the storing capacity, the larger fish have the higher levels of concentration.

The warning applies particularly to pregnant women and to children. According to Dr. Handy, research done with pregnant mammals shows that the PCB does create problems for pregnant women because the PCB can be transferred across the placenta.

In addition to the health department warning, the state department of agriculture announced that it will seize any fish offered for commercial sale containing more than five parts per million of PCB.

Lake trout over 24 inches caught by commercial fisherman in Lake Michigan incidental to their other netting operations will no longer be sold for human consumption.

Testing for the PCBs is being done by the department of natural resources.

PCB warnings have been issued by commercial fishermen during chub hearings. The fishermen compared the PCB problem to the one that existed several years ago with DDT.

Tuesday the chairman of the Lake Michigan toxic substances committee said that the committee had recommended to the United States environmental protection agency that PCB be limited to essential uses.

PCBs are used in industrial processes as a hydraulic fluid, heat transfer fluid and electrical insulators. PCB is also found in hand soaps, paper packaging materials and carbonless paper.

Because of the problem the Michigan department of natural resources has said it will push for a ban on the chemical compound.

The Wisconsin natural resources board is expected to take some action at its next meeting.

Dr. Handy said humans face no danger in drining water with a high PCB level because concentrations are not high enough.