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Monsanto Product Linked to Cancer

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Monsanto Co. reports a preliminary study has found a higher than normal incidence of lung cancer among deceased workers who had once worked in its plant that produces polycholorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

But Dr. George Roush, director of the company's medical and environmental health department, said there is no indication that the presence of the disease was related to PCBs.

Roush also said the study has shown no cases of malignant melanoma or pancreatic cancer were found among current or former employes of the unit. Roush cautioned that the lung cancer findings were based on "raw information" and require a controlled study. Monsanto said it expects to complete its investigation in 12 to 18 months.

The Monsanto information, disclosed in a news release, was based on a review of the records of more than 300 current and former employes at its sole PCB production unit at Sauget, Ill., since 1936.

PCBs, the fire-resistant chemicals used mainly as insulating fluids in electrical equipment such as high-power transformers, have been termed a significant health hazard by the Environmental Protection Agency. they have been shown to cause reproductive failures, gastric disorders and skin lesions in mammals.

Monsanto, the only American manufacturer of PCBs, announced in January it intends to phase out production of the chemicals.