

U.S. Curbs PCB Spread, Will Seek Eventual Ban

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The Environmental Protection Agency announced a crackdown yesterday on the spread of potentially dangerous chemicals known as PCBs into the environment and said it will seek an eventual halt to all PCB production and use in the United States.

PCBs—whose chemical name is polychlorinated biphenyls—have been shown to produce a variety of human damage from skin lesions to miscarriages.

EPA Administrator Russell E. Train, in announcing the agency action, called the chemicals a "suspected carcinogen" although data is lacking on PCBs' cancer-causing properties in humans.

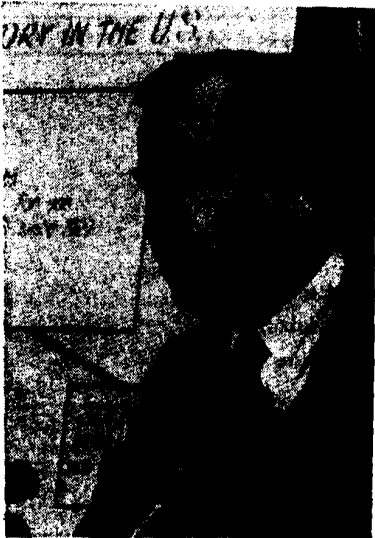
"PCBs constitute a significant hazard to human health and the environment and must be immediately and effectively controlled with every means at our disposal," he said.

Train said the agency has found PCB levels exceeding the limit set by the Food and Drug Administration of 5 parts per million in fish from New York State, the Great Lakes, the Mississippi River and off the Southern California coast.

EPA officials said yesterday they have also discovered PCBs in milk, eggs and poultry from livestock exposed to grain contaminated with the chemicals.

Noting that the EPA has no authority at present to restrict or halt the use of PCBs, Train said he was nevertheless directing the EPA's 10 regional offices to begin applying provisions of the 1972 federal Clean Water Act immediately to eliminate the chemicals from the waste water of industrial plants handling PCBs around the country.

The sole U.S. manufacturer of the chemicals is the Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co., whose plant in Saugey, Ill., on the Mississippi River



Associated Press

EPA Administrator Train announces action on PCBs.

produces about 40 million pounds annually.

The EPA yesterday also listed 37 other plants around the United States—including one in South Boston, Va., and another in Lynchburg, Va.—which manufacture electrical transformers or capacitors using PCBs.

Because of their stable, fire-resistant quality, PCBs in liquid form are used widely in heavy-duty electrical equipment. They are also used in the manufacture of paints, plastics, sealants, lubricants and carbonless copy paper.

Since 1929 about 700 million pounds of PCBs have been manufactured in the United States, Train said. About 300 million pounds are currently in service, while the rest, because of their virtually

indestructible qualities, remain in landfills, on river and lake bottoms, and around production sites.

"We probably should have moved more rapidly sooner on this problem," Train said. He noted that EPA directives to industry in 1972 cut PCB production by 50 per cent and limited their use to closed systems to prevent leaks.

In announcing the crackdown Train also proposed new federal regulations to control environmental damage from spills of more than 300 substances including PCBs. No regulations presently exist to cover such spills.

The new regulations would provide for penalties from \$5,000 to \$5 million against those who are responsible for the spills.