



Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

The Rocky Flats Plant is working closely with appropriate regulatory agencies to perform necessary environmental investigations and provide recommendations for remedial actions to remove past PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) contamination detected in certain areas of the plantsite.

Electrical transformers and equipment which contained PCB fluids—and which have since been removed from the plantsite or taken out of service—are believed to be the source of the contamination which was recently identified

PCBs, because of their fire-resistant and dielectric properties, were used extensively throughout industry in electrical equipment such as transformers and capacitors. They also were used in the formulation of lubricating and cutting oils, in pesticides and flame retardants, and as plasticizers in paints, copying paper, adhesives, sealants and plastics. PCBs are relatively resistant to chemical and biological breakdown and measurable levels have been reported in animals and fish around the world. PCBs are considered a suspected carcinogen and exposure may cause skin disorders such as chloracne and transient dermatitis. Under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), the US Congress banned further manufacture of PCBs beyond 1979.

Since 1972, Rocky Flats has followed a policy which prohibits the purchase of any fluids known to contain PCBs. In addition, a plantwide inventory conducted in the mid-1980s revealed a total of 54 electrical transformers at Rocky Flats which contained varying amounts of PCBs. Transformers are considered contaminated if PCB concentrations exceed 50 parts per million. Twenty-nine of those transformers were successfully drained, flushed, and refilled with non-PCB fluids. The remaining 25 transformers were removed by an off-site contractor and replaced with non-PCB transformers. One small

highly specialized PCB transformer remains on site.

In early 1991, a routine inspection of a transformer on the roof of Building 707, and subsequent samples of a water/oil mixture found in a transformer containment pan, confirmed the presence of PCBs. Additional sampling detected PCBs in a nearby roof drain, and in a small soil area adjacent to Building 707. Concentrations ranged from 4,500 micrograms/100 cm² on the roof to approximately 920 micrograms/100 cm² in the drain

A preliminary investigation determined that a transformer pad on the roof of Building 707 is the likely source of the PCB contamination. A new transformer was placed on that pad in 1983, but the pad was not cleaned prior to the installation because the previous transformer was considered a non-PCB unit. Sample results confirming the presence of PCBs were received in late January 1991. The plant notified the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in early February and has continued to discuss and meet with agency officials regarding appropriate cleanup plans

In addition to developing a corrective action plan to remove identified PCB contamination at Building 707, Rocky Flats also has initiated an expanded program to sample other areas of the plantsite where PCB transformers and equipment previously were located to determine if any further PCB contamination exists. If found, remedial action will be taken as appropriate.

Based on a review of worker activity in the affected area, and the concentrations of PCBs in the soil, there is essentially no potential for adverse worker health and safety impacts from the identified contamination. The plant will continue to work closely with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Colorado Department of Health to ensure affected sites are remediated and do not pose a risk to public health or safety.

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