5-06/090.15 - Handling Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) Accidents or Spills

Handling Polychlorinated Biphenyls (P.C.B.) Accidents or Spills

Although polycholorinated biphenyls are being phased out in private industry, the danger of being exposed to this toxic substance and possible carcinogen still exists. It is particularly dangerous if ingested. Contact with the skin may also pose a potential health problem. Should any exposure occur or ingestion takes place, the following procedures shall be followed:

- Ingestion - immediately transport victim to nearest hospital and advise staff that the accident involved P.C.B.; or
- Skin contamination only - wash affected area with waterless hand cleanser. Remove with clean cloth, dispose of property.

P.C.B. Capacitor Identification/Description

Although capacitors containing P.C.B. can be placed anywhere along a power line, generally they will be situated below a transformer or within several poles distance from the transformer. The minimum grouping of capacitors is three (3), however up to twelve (12) may be encountered on a single power pole. Mounting may be horizontal or vertical and the capacitor may be dark brown or gray in color. Each capacitor has a four inch rectangular placard attached, identifying it as containing P.C.B.; the placard is yellow with black lettering.

Special attention should be given to transformers located on private premises and to Edison facilities which are fenced and identified as restricted areas. These private premises and restricted areas pose serious hazards due to the possibility of large quantities of P.C.B.

Substance Identification and Procedures:

- P.C.B. varies from light oil to molasses in consistency and can vary in color from milky white or pale yellow to dark brown. P.C.B. in liquid form emits a distinct chlorine odor. P.C.B. is not bio-degradable and should be prevented form entering the food chain through cultivated crops or water. Containment is possible by forming an earthen dam around the contaminated area. The area should then be secured until decontamination teams respond.

Notification:

- If the spill involves Southern California Edison, notify the area office immediately;
- If the P.C.B. has entered or threatens to enter the water system (sewer, fresh water, or ocean) the Coast Guard Captain of the Port of Long Beach (310) 521-6184, should be notified; and/or
- If field personnel are contaminated or there is any release or suspected release of P.C.B., it should be reported immediately to the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, Hazardous Waste Control Program, (323) 890-4317, during business hours and after business hours, (323) 881-2455.

Provide the agency notified with the following:

- Address and/or major cross streets;
- Amount of spillage and reason for spillage; and

- Power pole number if applicable.

Notification of health services at the above number will also initiate an Emergency Hazardous Waste Team response to assist in providing advice and incident investigation.

Notify the fire department if applicable.