

# The PCB Report

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"Concerns over the hazards of PCBs are based on solid scientific information. These pollutants are linked to developmental defects of cancer and other grave problems in humans and animals. The risks are great and the need for action is clear: We must work to eliminate or at least to severely restrict the release of these toxins without delay."

President George W. Bush  
April 19, 2001

## Uncovering the facts about PCBs

This newsletter is an effort on behalf of the Coosa River Basin Initiative (CRBI) to give citizens additional facts about polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and the General Electric Corporation's (GE) work to protect the Rome community from this toxic substance.

From 1953 until 1977, General Electric used PCBs in the production of medium transformers at its Redmond Road facility in West Rome. In 1976, the federal government banned PCBs, and their use was discontinued at the GE facility in Rome.

PCBs were released into the environment in several ways. PCBs contaminated GE's facility through spills during the 24 years in which they were used. Once on the ground, rain and stormwater carried the PCBs to drainage ditches and off GE property into adjoining properties and into local streams and rivers.

Landfills at the GE site containing PCBs and other hazardous waste have also contaminated groundwater.

An unknown number of GE employees used PCBs at their homes as a termite deterrent, dust suppressant and wood treatment. And, an undetermined number of residents used PCB-contaminated sludge from Rome's wastewater treatment plant as fertilizer for gardens and

farms. Today, the extent of PCB contamination in the area is still not fully known.

This newsletter is an effort to give citizens facts that will help them make more informed decisions about GE's cleanup efforts here.

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Closed in 1997, the GE medium transformer site on Redmond Road has left a toxic PCB legacy in Rome.

## Health matters: PCBs can harm you

In local news media and in newsletters distributed to Floyd County residents during the past two years, GE has maintained that PCBs do not pose a threat to human health, but some public health experts who have studied the impacts of PCBs and reviewed scores of epidemiological studies call GE's propaganda "nonsense" and "lies." Evidence collected by researchers around the world shows that PCBs cause a number of serious health effects, including effects on the immune, reproductive, nervous and endocrine systems.

Research has also shown conclusively that PCBs cause cancer in animals, and epidemiological studies show the same cancer relationship in humans. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer all have declared PCBs probable carcinogens.

Despite overwhelming evidence, GE is unyielding in its stance on human health and PCBs. Said one company spokesman: "On the subject of health, the issue is clear: PCBs do not adversely affect human health."

see **Human Health** on page 7

## Residential testing Further investigation needed

How's this for a warning label?

Home buyers beware: homes built prior to 1972 and located in Northwest Georgia and Northeast Alabama may be harmful to your health.

Because of GE's refusal to conduct a thorough investigation of the residences of former workers, anyone wishing to market their pre-1972 home may become stigmatized with such a label. The problem arises from GE's practice of selling Pyranol, the PCB-laden oil used in the company's transformers, to employees for use as pesticide, dust suppressant and wood treatment. Between 1952 and 1969, the oil was sold in 50-gallon drums to employees from the company's salvage yard.

The company does not have records of who purchased the oil or how much, but GE employees who worked in the salvage yard claim that hundreds of barrels left the plant. GE employees lived within a 60-mile radius of the plant, and the plant employed some 5,000 people during its 44 years of  
see **Residential Testing** on page 5

