

The investigation of residential properties by GE and EPD is ongoing. If you believe PCBs may have been used on your property or another property, contact GE at 706-291-3488 or EPD toll free at 888-869-1191. Information is kept confidential.

# Home treated with Pyranol? Worried?

If you live in a home that might have been treated with Pyranol or at a residence where PCB-contaminated sludge might have been used as fertilizer, is there any reason to be worried?

Yes, but don't call the doctor just yet. In most cases where Pyranol was used at homes as a termite treatment, the PCBs are buried beneath the topsoil and the toxins probably do not pose an immediate health threat for residents. That doesn't mean it is safe to leave the toxins in place, said state and federal toxicologists familiar with the Rome PCB problem.

The primary concern is future land use. Because of PCBs' persistence, the toxins will survive for years, even decades, depending on contamination levels.

"We can't control the future," said Elmer Akin, a toxicologist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "To have PCBs in high concentrations and to not know future land use, you have to have a level of concern."

Utility and repair work or any renovations that disturb topsoil around the foundation of a Pyranol-treated home could result in the reintroduction of buried PCBs. If contaminated homes are removed or the property redeveloped, the toxins will likewise get a second life above ground.

PCBs left in the soil can also contribute to contaminated run off feeding area streams and rivers, and although by themselves PCBs don't generally migrate to groundwater, in the karst geology of the area and in the presence of organic solvents, there is the possibility of PCBs leaching to groundwater.

"With all those possible scenarios," Akin said. "The

feeling is they (PCBs) should come out."

The most likely scenario for exposure for current residents is through contact with contaminated soil. This is of particular concern for young children who tend to play in the dirt and can place soiled hands in their mouths. There is also the possibility of breathing vaporized PCBs inside a treated home, but such exposure is not likely to be significant since the PCBs contained in Pyranol are less likely to become airborne.

In recent blood screenings of 19 Romans living at property with known PCB contamination, three had detectable levels of PCBs in their blood, but those levels were not significantly elevated.

PCB intake from eating crops grown on soil amended with PCB-contaminated sludge is limited, according to the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Studies show that while vaporized PCBs can settle on leaves and be absorbed into the plant, plants do not readily take up PCBs through their roots.



Hazardous waste barrels at GE's medium transformer site.

## Homebuyer Beware:

### Disclosure forms ineffective, but soil tests can offer peace of mind

While all real estate transactions are accompanied by disclosure forms in which sellers must admit to any knowledge of PCBs on the property, local real estate agents say these forms are not always an effective means of identifying contaminated property and protecting homebuyers. Homes might have passed through several owners since Pyranol was used on the property leaving current owners with no knowledge of past practices.

"The thing that needs to happen is it needs to become a buyer's issue," said Graham Dixon of Dixon and Tate Real Estate. "As a buyer there are questions that you should ask and that needs to become one of them." Local agents say that few buyers have expressed concerns since news of possible widespread PCB contamination surfaced two years ago.

"I'm seeing people be a little more cautious, but that's a good thing," said Julie Windler of Garden Lakes Realty. "It is not commonplace, but that they are asking at all is because of the increased awareness."

Soil tests are the only sure way of detecting PCBs on a property. Tests are available through numerous analyti-

cal labs in the Atlanta area with prices averaging about \$80 per sample or about \$800 per home. These labs, which use the same methods used by EPD and GE, provide instructions for collecting samples and appropriate containers for samples. Results showing PCB levels are usually ready within days.

EPD officials said the soil tests the agency has conducted in Rome cost about \$150 per sample or between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per residence. GE-Rome site manager Richard Lester said the tests GE conducts cost from \$7,000 to \$10,000 per residence. These tests include at least 10 individual samples.

To conduct PCB soil tests on your property, contact Environmental Services Network at 770-919-0805, Analytical Environmental Services at 770-457-8177 or Analytical Services, Inc. at 770-734-4200. Additional labs offering similar services can be found in Atlanta telephone yellow pages.

