

DNR discovers some PCB used on Hills' unpaved roads

By PHILIP A. SHERMAN

At least 24 miles of unpaved road in Farmington Hills have been treated with an oil containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), according to a report by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The roads were oiled last May to control dust generated by traffic, according to Larry Savage, Farmington Hills city manager. Savage said, however, that the amount of PCB in the oil used was minimal.

"Certain tests that were taken indicated varying degrees (of PCB) going from nothing to 37 parts per million," Savage said.

The city manager said two types of tests were taken over a two-month period until July when city officials contacted the DNR for analysis of an unknown liquid in the oil.

"We took samples from May 15 to June 5 for asphaltic content," Savage said.

City specifications require at least 5 percent asphalt content in the oil, which was confirmed in the original tests.

Savage said he was advised July 1 that the original samples contained a "certain liquid" that was believed "possibly to be a synthetic lubricant or fire retardant of some type," according to a report from a private testing service.

"We contacted the DNR July 3 and took in samples (of the liquid) July 5," Savage said. "On Aug. 30 the DNR took actual samples from the street."

From the second set of samples the DNR formulated the report containing the PCB percentages. "They've given us nothing in writing," Savage said.

Savage said the information was not released until now because the DNR indicated its investigation could be hindered by doing so.

THIS IS the first time Farmington Hills has ever been involved in a dust control program using oil. According to Savage, the city's dust control program usually involves several applications of calcium chloride financed by special assessing of adjacent property owners.

Savage said the DNR is aware of the presence of PCB in road oiling material. He added that this was the first opportunity the agency had to document

the presence of PCB in a dust control program.

According to Savage, Bill's Road Oiling Service of Ferndale was contracted to do the work for Farmington Hills.

Seymour Shep, a sales agent for the company, acknowledged that the work had been done by his firm. When asked if he knew the material used to oil the roads contained PCB, Shep said "not that I know of."

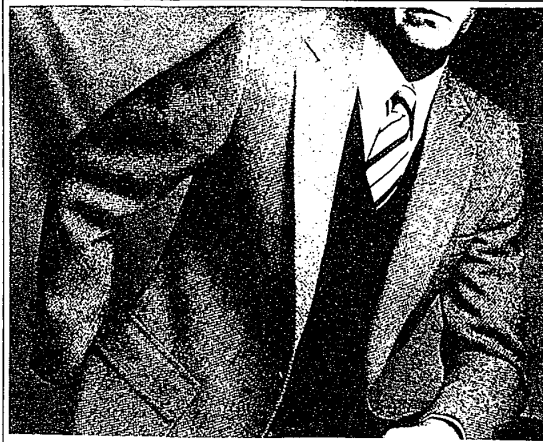
"Everything we have here is tested by an independent testing lab," Shep added. He said he couldn't pinpoint the source of the oil used in Farmington Hills because "it probably comes from so many different sources."

In a release issued by the city late last week, Savage said that although the DNR indicated no public health hazard exists, the matter was being referred to the Attorney General to determine if any state or federal laws were violated.

Stewart Freeman, the assistant attorney general in charge of the environmental protection division, said he had not yet received a letter from Savage or the DNR.

"Normally, oil used on roads is not oil that has any commercial value. On dust suppression you would use some kind of waste oil that had some contaminants or dirt in it," Freeman said.

Freeman said that PCB had once been widely used in industry as a coolant in transformers. It has also been used as a fire retardant.



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Conducted by Francesco DiBlasi, the symphony will play Bernstein's "Overture to Candide," Tchaikovsky's "Suite from the Sleeping Beauty," Stravinsky's "Berceuse" and finale from the "Firebird" as well as Beethoven's "Concerto for Violin, Cello and Piano."

Violinist Alfio Pignotti, professor of

music at Eastern Michigan University has served as concertmaster of the New Orleans Philharmonic, the San Antonio Symphony and the Chicago Little Symphony. A Fulbright scholar, he has appeared throughout the United States, England and Italy. He has recording on such labels as Composer's Recording Institute, Educio and Coronet.

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