

# NEWS CLIPPING SERVICE

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## Bank fire stirs *Sun-Journal* fears of PCBs

By Phillip J. O'Connor  
and Hanke Gratteau

Tests were being conducted Wednesday night to determine if the First National Bank of Chicago would be allowed to reopen its Loop headquarters after a fire in an electrical transformer raised the possibility of toxic contamination.

However, spokesmen for the Fire Department, Commonwealth Edi-

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son Co. and the bank said it appeared that no highly toxic PCBs were burned in the fire, three floors below street level near One First National Plaza at Clark  
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## BLAZE: Bank set to reopen if tests for

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and Monroe. Barbara Arnold, a Commonwealth Edison spokesman, said a preliminary evaluation showed little indication of PCB contamination. If test results, which are expected to be completed Thursday morning, are acceptable, the bank will be opened for business as usual, officials said.

When PCBs—polychlorinated biphenyls—burn, they create dioxin, one of the most toxic chemicals.

Ten people, including five firefighters, were injured—none seriously—in the blaze, three floors below street level of One First National Plaza, which sent thousands of workers from the 57-story building that is the headquarters of the First National Bank of Chicago into the street, tying up Loop traffic.

John Muraro, a spokesman for the state Environmental Protection Agency, said Edison had taken samples of soot and air with a "scanner" on every fifth floor of the building to see if PCBs were present.

Arnold said that while traces of PCB were found in a spill of oil from the 10,000-pound transformer, there were no signs that the oil itself burned, emitting PCBs.

John Hogan, another Edison spokesman, said 15 of the 200 gallons of liquid in the transformer had spilled out during the fire but "had not been consumed by fire. There was no PCB-related smoke involved."

Hogan said there were no air ducts in the vault that contained the transformer, so smoke did not get into the building's heating and air-conditioning system. He said smoke seen coming from air ducts in the main bank

building during the fire was from a diesel engine.

However, if the tests turn up evidence of PCBs, Muraro said, "we will go back over the building with much more thorough sampling." That would result in closing the building for three to five days or longer, he said.

The PCBs were in a liquid used as a coolant in the transformer.

Lt. Dennis McGuire, a Fire Department spokesman, said firefighters wearing breathing masks and protective clothing used dry chemicals to put out the fire within five minutes, and then noticed liquid on the floor.

Edison officials were notified, and Fire Commissioner Louis T. Galante, Police Supt.-designate Fred Rice, city Public Safety Director Samuel W. Nolan and other officials went to the scene to assess the emergency.

After the fire was out, some 50 firefighters went to 1st District fire headquarters, at Illinois and Dearborn, where their clothing was placed in plastic bags and they took showers as a precaution against PCB contamination.

Firefighters Lakewood Cross, 30, and Richard Kelly, 55, suffered smoke inhalation and were admitted to Northwestern Memorial Hospital in fair condition.

Five people who were identified by a bank spokesman as employees in the bank's underground garage were treated in Northwestern and released. They are Benjamin Bruie, 22, of 3515 W. 130th, Robbins; Donie Arnold, 29, of 10751 S. Rhodes; Richard Deitche, 22, of 5747 S. Francis; Anthony Seykes, 32, of 1213 W. 107th Pl., and Bette Gandelman, 32, address unavailable.

Admitted to Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical