



Green Beagle



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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Toxic capacitors discovered in Ziyang City amid growing concern over PCBs pollution**

Beijing, June 24, 2014 – Scrapped capacitors containing toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been found in Ziyang City, Sichuan Province. The illegal toxic substances were discovered in 47 insulating paper coils at CSR Ziyang Co by a former employee, Mr. Guo Ruzhong. PCBs are considered one of the world’s worst chemicals and are scheduled for global elimination under the Stockholm Convention – a global legally binding treaty that includes China. Green Beagle, a Beijing City-based environmental NGO, commissioned tests of the wastes at SGS-CTSC Shanghai laboratory as part of its project “Strengthening the capacity of pollution victims and civil society organizations to increase chemical safety in China” (1). The results were as high as 8.11mg/L PCBs – 4000 times higher than permitted under Chinese law (0.002 mg/L defined by the Identification Standards for Hazardous Wastes-Identification for Extraction Toxicity (GB 5085.3-2007)). Laboratory personnel noted that this sample had the highest PCB concentration they had ever measured. Ziyang Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau has been informed about the situation and acted to remove the wastes and clean up the site.

“This incident provides a clear warning about chemicals that everyone thought were part of the past,” said Mao Da, Green Beagle. “Given the large number of capacitors used at the factory, environmental authorities in Ziyang City and more widely in Sichuan Province should conduct a thorough examination of other factories and enforce Chinese law to protect workers, communities, and the environment.”

Elimination of PCBs is an obligation of the government under the Stockholm Convention. The treaty requires the government to identify, label, and remove equipment containing PCBs for complete elimination by 2025. “Convention obligations require authorities to promote measures that reduce exposure and risk to PCBs – and that includes leaking equipment and piles of PCBs-containing waste on the floor,” said Mao Da. “Inventory and action is required so that no one else suffers the fate of Guo Ruzhong and his co-workers.”

CSR Ziyang Co was the former location of No. 431 Factory of the Ministry of Railway. The company produced locomotives in the 1960s and used at least 500 power capacitors containing PCBs which often leaked, resulting in human exposure. Mr. Guo Ruzhong worked at the factory as an electrician. Unfortunately, Guo was diagnosed with nasopharyngeal cancer in 1990 at age 44. While receiving treatment, he learned that many of his co-workers were also suffering from serious diseases including cancers and liver diseases. PCBs are probably human carcinogens and damage the immune, reproductive, endocrine, and nervous systems.

- MORE FOLLOWS -

In 2003, the factory admitted that more than 200 PCB-containing capacitors were still in use at the factory. In 2009, the factory delivered them to Tianjin Hejia Veolia Environmental Services, a waste disposal provider for disposal. However, Guo reminded the company and public that due to their persistence, the leaked PCBs would continue to pose a threat. In March 2014, Guo discovered 47 insulating paper coils sitting in a waste pile at the factory that he recognized formed part of the electrical capacitors containing PCBs. Green Beagle received a sample and SGS-CTSC Shanghai laboratory confirmed extremely high levels of PCBs. Guo informed the Ziyang Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau of the situation who then acted to remove the wastes and clean up the site.

## References

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Identification Standards for Hazardous Wastes-Identification for Extraction Toxicity (GB 5085.3-2007)

## Footnotes

(1) Strengthening the capacity of pollution victims and civil society organizations to increase chemical safety in China is an EU-funded project of IPEN with partners Arnika – Toxics and Waste Programme and Green Beagle that aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and communities impacted by pollution to increase chemical safety in China. The Project (also known as the China Chemical Safety Project) is being implemented in China over two years with the EU contribution.

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