

Chemical spill at port under investigation

By LARRY CAMPBELL
Daily News reporter

A spill of an undetermined amount of the toxic chemical PCB still being cleaned up Thursday at the Port of Anchorage is under investigation by at least two government agencies.

The chemical, spilled Monday, was inside two electrical power transformers inside 65-gallon containers. Six containers were strapped to a Sealand flatbed truck en route to Anchorage from Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks.

Officials suspect the leak began somewhere between Mile 171 of Parks Highway and the port.

The containers were sched-

uled for shipment to an Idaho disposal location. Only one container housed the transformers.

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation field officer Jim Hayden estimated one gallon of the oily substance escaped from the container onto the truck bed and the asphalt parking lot where the truck was moved after the leak was discovered.

Hayden said the company hired to supervise transporting the containers, Pepper Industries of California, today will begin ripping up asphalt that is still contaminated with the chemical. Pepper Industries had hired Sealand as the shipping agent.

The Sealand flatbed that

transported the containers to Anchorage has been removed to a Crowley Environmental Services Corp. repair yard on the Old Seward Highway for further decontamination.

The leaking container was discovered by Sealand employees when the truck arrived in Anchorage Monday afternoon. Port authorities, the DEC and Pepper officials were notified, said Hayden, and the truck and flatbed trailer were parked in a vacant portion of a Sealand parking area.

Hayden said Crowley was contacted by Pepper officials to begin immediate cleanup operations. DEC officials supervised the cleanup.

Crowley crews also installed a temporary plug in the damaged container. All six containers have been loaded on another flatbed trailer, but it is not known if and when they will continue to Idaho.

Wednesday, a Pepper representative, who refused to comment on the spill, took samples from the asphalt lot to be chemically tested for contaminants, according to Hayden.

Hayden said he was told by the Pepper official that contamination levels were "slightly higher" than allowable federal standards. He told Hayden that Pepper Industries would dig up the

asphalt where the PCB spilled and replace it. Hayden said he did not see a copy of the chemical analysis report.

Meanwhile, Environmental Protection Agency officials are investigating the labeling on the six containers. EPA official Bill Lawrence said all the containers indicated they contained the PCB chemical, although the box containing the transformer may not have stated as such before the leak was discovered.

"We're concerned with how the containers were labeled. Someone is responsible, and we want to find out exactly who," said Lawrence.

Hayden said Thursday night that the portion of the

parking lot where the leak occurred is still cordoned off and being guarded by Pepper officials.

Hayden said there is no danger from people being exposed to PCB along the highway. He said the substance was leaking from its container at a rate of about one quart an hour. He estimated that if the box was leaking, the flow would not be fast enough to leave dangerous levels of the chemical along the road.

PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) is a chemical used for many industrial purposes, including as an insulator in electrical components. The chemical is highly toxic and is a suspected carcinogen.

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Anchorage Daily News/Paul Brown

A well-dressed picket walks his line at the Port of Anchorage Wednesday.

Teamsters shut down Port of Anchorage for a day

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tor that has been struck by Teamsters for the past 15 months.

The NLRB ordered the picketing halted and NLRB district office manager John Nelson said in Seattle Wednesday night that his office will go into federal court in Anchorage today seeking a temporary restraining order so that Sealand can resume operations.

It could not be learned whether the union would stop picketing on the orders of the NLRB or fight the attempt for a restraining order.

The strike affected Sealand and the port as follows:

- Unloading of the 500-foot Sea-Land vessel, the Newark, was prevented. The ship contained about 300 containers bound for Anchorage Cold Storage and other businesses throughout the state.

- Union employees at four or five other businesses

operating at the port honored the pickets lines and stopped working.

- About 125 workers employed by Sea-Land and their contractors walked off the job.

Port Director Bill McKinney said he will take action to reopen businesses not involved in the dispute should general port strike conditions remain in place this morning.

He said he would do so by setting up private gates for Sea-Land and ordering the pickets to confine their activities to those gates, which would allow other commerce to resume.

About 60 containers had been unloaded by late Wednesday, and sources said management might work through the night to unload the ship. Company sources indicated there was no immediate concern for shortages of goods bound for statewide distribution.

Union officials were unavailable for comment.

The dispute between the Teamsters and Sea-Land be-

came public two weeks ago at a general Teamsters local meeting.

A union member complained at the meeting to Teamsters secretary/treasurer Jesse Carr that the union had allowed Sealand to resume handling cargo for Anchorage Cold Storage, which has been struck by the union since June 1981.

Carr reportedly interrupted the complaining member and vowed that he would "shut down Sealand" in a matter of days.

On Monday, the union delivered an ultimatum to Sealand saying that it would strike the company should the company fail to arbitrate a grievance the union said had been long unresolved. The letter specified that the grievance was not related to the Anchorage Cold Storage strike.

On Tuesday, Sealand filed a complaint with the district NLRB office in Seattle accusing the union of threatening an illegal secondary boycott.

An NLRB investigator

talked with union and company counsel in Seattle Tuesday and until late Wednesday, finally agreeing with the company two hours after the strike began.

The union, which was cited in a formal complaint issued by the NLRB, may now argue that complaint before an administrative law judge, a process that can take several months.

A source close to management said that Carr had volunteered to unload the perishable commodities aboard the ship, but that the company insisted that work return to normal.

The events of this week followed a scenario outlined by sources close to the company when the dispute heated up.

Although Sealand officials would not comment on the outcome before the NLRB, the lawyer for Anchorage Cold Storage did. "I am happy that the NLRB was able to see through the fog the Teamsters were trying to foist on the city," said Douglas Riggs.

Strike spreads to Seattle

By STEVE SEPLOCHA
Daily News business editor

Teamsters Union Local 959 spread its strike against Sea-Land Service, Alaska's largest cargo carrier company, to the company's Seattle dock Thursday as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) asked a federal court to stop the strike.

About 20 pickets closed down the Sea-Land Seattle operation at 10 a.m. A dockside arbitrator was immediately called to the scene, ruled the strike an illegal secondary boycott and ordered longshoremen to return to work.

It was the second ruling in as many days that the strike was illegal. However, Sealand's operations at the Port of Anchorage and in Seattle remained virtually shut down.

Chief U.S. District Judge Walter McGovern in Seattle was asked by the NLRB to issue a temporary restraining order against the pickets in both cities. A ruling on the motion is expected today.

Meanwhile, management personnel in Anchorage continued to unload the 500-foot vessel Newark, which was the original target of the union when the strike began Wednesday afternoon. Some goods were picked up by

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distributors, and there was still no concern expressed over shortages of goods.

General picketing at the Port of Anchorage also was reduced by the union to cover only those gates used by Sealand. When the strike began, pickets marched at six of the seven port gates, which threatened to stop or slow businesses not involved in the dispute.

Early Thursday, the union appealed to the district director of the NLRB to reverse a finding of illegal secondary boycotting that was issued two hours after the strike began. John Nelson listened to the arguments for more than an hour in his Seattle office before refusing to overturn his investigator's findings.

NLRB field attorney James Sand then asked McGovern for the restraining order.

Both sides in the dispute expected that Teamsters secretary/treasurer Jesse Carr would exhaust all legal means before ordering the pickets down.

The union is charging that the company has violated an agreement it made when it dissolved its trucking unit two years ago. At that time the company reportedly agreed to contract only firms that were paying Teamster scale wages.

Company lawyers have argued, however, that Sealand has no say over pay or work conditions of companies with which it has hauling contracts and that the strike represents a secondary boycott.

The company has further charged that the strike is a thinly disguised reprisal against Sealand for its resumption of cargo service for Anchorage Cold Storage, a wholesaler and distributor that has been struck for the past 15 months by Teamsters.

Sea-Land stopped hauling for Anchorage Cold Storage shortly after the strike began in 1981 and resumed its service two months ago.

This led to a complaint at a recent union meeting and a threat by Carr to shut down Sealand.

Strike ruled unfair

By STEVE SEPLOCHA
Daily News business editor

Teamsters Union Local 959 shut down all private business at the Port of Anchorage Wednesday in a strike that was almost immediately ruled an unfair labor practice by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Pickets went up at the port compound and offices of Sealand Service Inc., the state's largest cargo carrier, about 3 p.m. for what the union termed a long-standing contract grievance with the company.

Two hours later, the NLRB sided with the company and ruled in Seattle that the strike was an illegal secondary boycott aimed at Anchorage Cold Storage, a wholesaler and distribu-