

# <sup>1-30-82</sup>Silicon Valley safety study 'incomplete'

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An 18-month state study of health and safety hazards in Silicon Valley's semiconductor industry was criticized sharply Thursday for the way it was conducted.

Amanda Hawes, a San Jose attorney who is an outspoken workers' advocate and a board member of the Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health, said she believes the special Cal-OSHA task force studied only a narrow slice of the industry.

"Basically, they got what industry agreed they could look at," Hawes said.

Michael Eisenscher, field organizer for the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, the union that hopes to organize the non-union semiconductor industry in the Silicon Valley, said he objected to the fact that the study was done on the basis of visits to 13 companies that had "voluntarily cooperated by making their facilities available for inspection."

Industry representatives, on the other hand, praised the Cal-OSHA study as a "clean bill of health."

Tom Hinkelman, executive director of the Semiconductor Industry Association, said the report concludes that "the industry has done a good job and that it's going to continue to do a better job."

In a prepared statement, the American Electronics Association said the study "provides additional evidence that the semiconductor industry is one of the nation's safest in the manufacturing sector. Most of the report's recommendations appear to be aimed at the potential for acute exposure rather than actual conditions found in the work environment."

During a press conference at Cal-OSHA's San Francisco office, Dr. Richard Wade, the Cal-OSHA official who directed the study, said "voluntary cooperation" did not compromise the \$90,000 study's credibility.

Although Wade said Cal-OSHA had the legal right to enter the companies without their approval and without prior notice, he said the agency chose to use a "consultative mode" rather than an "enforcement mode."

Wade's boss, Donald Vial, director of the state Department of Industrial Relations, also defended Cal-

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OSHA's decision to visit only companies that agreed to the visit.

"Our purpose was to get access to the companies and the process, and in order to have access, you have to have cooperation," Vial said.

Vial described the report as a "textbook" for the industry and for Cal-OSHA.

But Hawes and Eisenscher said they considered the study far from complete. They criticized the study because it failed to examine the reproductive hazards in an industry where the majority of production workers are female.

Both worker advocates also attacked the report because it ignored the long-term effects of even low-level exposure to hazardous chemicals.

"It doesn't look like they looked into any chronic effects of chemicals that are, for example, carcinogenic," Hawes said. "They took a wait-and-see attitude. I don't know what they're waiting for — a body count?"

Wade admitted that the report did not study the chronic, long-term effects of exposure to the hundreds of toxic and hazardous chemicals used by the industry to manufacture electronic chips. He said these effects might be studied in the future by the industry or the state Department of Health Services.

Wade also backed away from labeling the report a "clean bill of health."

"The bottom line is that the industry has done a pretty good job of protecting workers, but there is a need for improvement in three areas: training, ventilation and monitoring for gases," Wade said. "Preventable accidents do occur," he said.

Most of those preventable accidents, he said, "involve acid, corrosive spills and the release of arsine, phosphine and silane gases which can have acute effects immediately on the respiratory system."

Wade said that smaller, newer companies generally have fewer health and safety controls than larger companies.

Wade refused to release the names of the companies in the study, saying that confidentiality had been one of the conditions under which Cal-OSHA visited the companies.

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