

# Two more leaks of hazardous chemicals found

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Two new leaks of hazardous chemicals, including suspected carcinogens, have been found in underground water supplies in Cupertino and Sunnyvale, a state water-quality engineer has confirmed.

Although officials said the chemicals have not shown up in any nearby public drinking wells, the Santa Clara County Health Department is offering to test private wells in the area.

"People who have family wells in the general area of all the sites of contamination can use our department's facilities to have their water tested," said Bernice Giansiracusa, the county's public-health director. "Depending on what was tested for, it would cost between \$50 and \$85."

Steve Brooks, the county's environmental-health sanitarian in charge of water quality, said the department must charge a testing fee because county budget cuts have forced his department to charge for most services.

## 39 reported

The new leaks bring to 39 the number of underground-industrial chemical leaks in Santa Clara County that have been reported to the state Regional Water Quality Control Board since about December 1981.

The state started requiring companies in the Santa Clara Valley to test their sites for contamination after a South San Jose well was fouled by a chemical that leaked from an underground storage tank at Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corp.

One of the two newly discovered leaks was in Cupertino and involved a suspected carcinogen, the degreasing solvent trichloroethylene. The chemical was detected beneath two solvent-storage tanks at 26,000 times the state's recommended limit in drinking water, which is 5 parts of TCE per billion parts of water.

High levels of xylene, another industrial solvent, and lower levels of Freon also were found when Tandem Computers tested the Cupertino site recently.

The concentration of TCE deeper in the test wells — at 55 feet below ground — was 1,100 parts per million, "a rather high level for 55 feet," said Adam

Olivieri, a senior engineer for the state Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Tom Iwamura, the ground-water expert for the Santa Clara Valley Water District, said officials are "extremely concerned" about the Cupertino chemical leak, which is near Valco Village Shopping Center. The area's geology makes it "a dangerous place for a spill," Iwamura said.

"A spill in this area will go directly to ground water, without perching on clay," he said. "Once it gets to ground water, it would begin to migrate rather rapidly, moving maybe several feet a day."

Four water utilities with wells in the vicinity, however, said Tuesday that checks of their wells had revealed no organic chemicals in the water.

Although the chemical leak in Cupertino was discovered at a site leased by Tandem Computers at 19333 Valco Parkway, state authorities and Tandem officials said they do not believe Tandem is the source.

Tandem spokeswoman Pat Becker said Tandem does not use the chemicals found underground. She also said the company never has used the underground metal storage tanks that officials believe may have

been the source of the chemicals.

The site's former tenant, Four-Phase Systems of Cupertino, said in a prepared statement that company officials are "evaluating the situation and are in the process of gathering the facts on our use" of the site, which Four-Phase leased from 1974 to 1978.

"We will fully cooperate" with state authorities "in every reasonable way," Four-Phase said in its statement.

## Sunnyvale leak probed

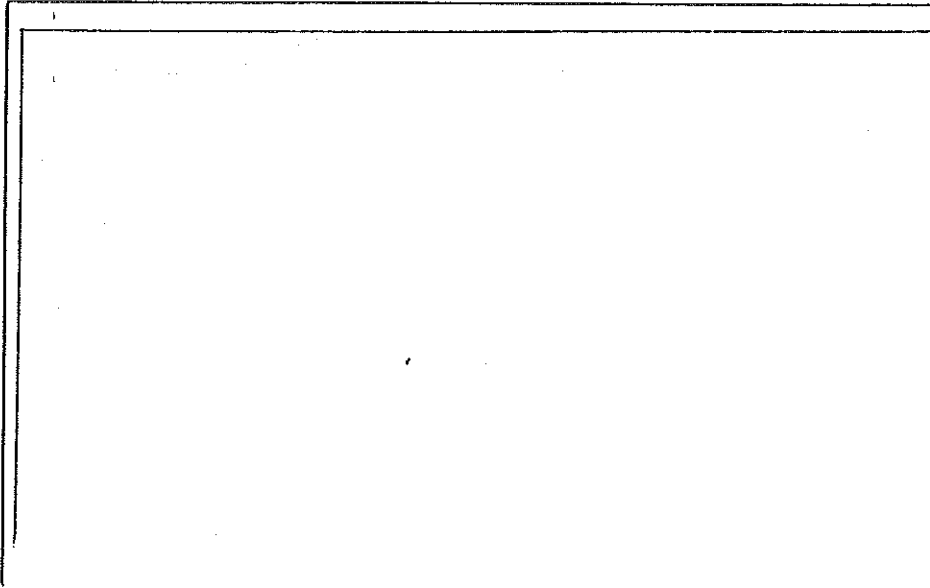
The source of the chemical leak in Sunnyvale also puzzles officials.

The leak included a small amount of TCE, somewhat larger concentrations of the suspected carcinogen benzene and thousands of parts per billion of the chemicals thio-bis-methane and methylene chloride.

It was detected at Verbatim Corp., 323 Soquel Way, but state authorities and Verbatim officials said they do not believe Verbatim is responsible.

Olivieri said that officials believe the chemicals that seeped into the ground water below the Verbatim site came from a nearby company.

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7  
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