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## Electronics firms oppose state law to control leaks

By Susan Yoachum  
Staff Writer

Despite growing concern over water contamination by industrial chemicals, prominent Santa Clara County electronics firms are opposing a proposed statewide law to control underground storage of chemicals.

The American Electronics Association, a national trade group that includes such giants as Hewlett-Packard Co., opposes the statewide

proposal — even though it supported and helped draft a similar law adopted by cities in Santa Clara County.

AEA spokesman Alan Foster said Tuesday that the group opposes Palo Alto Assemblyman Byron Sher's bill because it allows cities to adopt additional restrictions.

As Glenn Affleck, Hewlett-Packard's technical regulations manager, put his company's objection:

*Back of Section, Col. 1*

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## High-tech firms oppose bill to control chemical tanks

*Continued from Page 1A*

"Every fire chief would come out with his little list of what's on his agenda. It would be different in every little community. We wanted it to be uniform."

But if Sher would agree to amend his bill to pre-empt local ordinances, Foster conceded that "it would wipe out" the underground chemical storage law recently passed by eight cities in Santa Clara County.

Sher's bill, which the Assembly passed

last month, will be heard today by the state Senate Health and Welfare Committee. If it does not pass — and several legislative sources say it is in trouble — it probably will be dead until the next legislative session.

Sher, reached on the Assembly floor in Sacramento, said he will not amend his bill to preclude local control.

"The situation is different from place to place in the state," Sher said. "The underground water systems differ, and the kinds of chemicals differ."

Besides, some feel that if the state law were written to pre-empt local rules, the industry could succeed in getting a weaker state law enacted.

Ted Smith, co-chairman of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, a citizens' group that lobbied for the local law, said the electronics industry is trying either to gut the issue statewide or lessen the restrictions already in place in Santa Clara County.

"What they are saying they want to do is

either kill it or make it pre-emptive," Smith said. "It would wipe out a year and a half of work, and it would be a real disaster."

During the past three years, dozens of wells in California have been found to be contaminated by industrial chemicals.

In Santa Clara County alone, 56 sites of shallow underground contamination from industrial chemicals have been discovered in recent months. Many of the sites belong to high-technology companies that use

large volumes and varieties of chemicals to process computer chips.

However, "the problem is not unique to Santa Clara County," Sher said. "I think industry now knows that, because these leaks have been discovered all over the state, there has been a gap (in regulations), and that there needs to be some kind of prevention."

"Industry recognizes it has a problem. They want to shape it in a way that is easiest for them to live with."