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Pollution smudges the valley's image

By Michelle Osborn
USA TODAY

There's a snake in the Garden of Eden of economic growth: The use of solvents and other hazardous chemicals by the Silicon Valley semiconductor industry.

The industry here pollutes the air daily with an estimated eight tons of smog-causing vapors, says the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

Some solvents used to prepare silicon chip surfaces evaporate in the air and mix with other pollutants, forming ozone, which causes respiratory problems. So the district passed a rule last month requiring the semiconductor industry to:

- Cover solvent station sinks used to clean the surfaces when not in use.
- Install pollution-abate-

ment equipment by shifting to a manufacturing process that uses different solvents, said Paul Brand, an information officer with the Bay Area district.

Members of a group called the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition aren't satisfied with the Bay Area district's regulation and report, however. The group claims the industry also uses chemicals it says can cause cancer and birth defects.

The California Air Resources Board in Sacramento is taking the first step toward regulation by developing a procedure for evaluating the chemicals' cancer-causing potential, said William I. Sessa

■ Install pollution-abate-