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Threats to drinking water supplies

By Mitchel Benson
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Solvent Service, a solvent recycling plant in San Jose, poses the most serious pollution threat to drinking water supplies among 46 sites in San Jose, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara that are ranked in a draft report released Wednesday.

Five of the 10 worst threats to drinking water supplies are in San Jose, according to the report by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. Of

Report ranks 46 Santa Clara Valley sites by danger

the 46 sites ranked, seven are in San Jose, 18 are in Santa Clara and 21 are in Sunnyvale.

Adam W. Olivieri, a senior engineer for the board, said Wednesday the board prepared the report to better assess workloads for its 14-member toxics division in

the handling of more than 100 confirmed contaminated sites in the Bay Area. The rankings are not intended to ridicule or embarrass the companies, he said.

He said the rankings offered few surprises for the board's staff: "It hit almost right on ..."

The report says, however, that the numerical rankings "indicate that the level of effort assigned to a few sites (including Solvent Service and seventh-ranked Magnex Corp. of San Jose) should be reviewed."

Don Dalke, chief of the water board's

toxics division, said Wednesday that his staff now will have a more objective method of determining how serious any future contamination sites are, compared with sites that are already identified.

After Solvent Service, the worst threats ranked were the IBM Corp. plant and the Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corp., both in South San Jose, Van Waters & Rogers in San Jose, and Pacific Nursery in

Continued on Page 10A

State ranks threats to water supply

Continued from Page 1A
Santa Clara

A follow-up report, expected in May, will rank the 46 sites in Wednesday's report with 24 others located in Cupertino, Los Gatos, Milpitas, Mountain View and Palo Alto. The 70 sites represent cases the water board is continuing to investigate and where cleanup operations have begun.

The board is one of nine regional boards throughout California. The regional boards are the state's primary watchdog over water quality. Each board's nine members, representing groups with specific interests such as industry, municipal government and agriculture, are appointed by the governor for four-year terms.

At Solvent Service, regional board engineers suspect that the solvents trichloroethylene and 1,1,1-trichloroethane were repeatedly spilled during attempts to fill and empty above-ground storage tanks on the company's property. The solvents subsequently soaked through the soil and contaminated underground water supplies.

Pump system

Richard McMurtry, a senior engineer for the board, said the agency recently approved a combination pump-and-trench system to remove the contaminated water from underground water supplies. He said the system should begin pumping in April.

Ruth Malonchi, office administrator at Solvent Service, said Wednesday that she had not seen the report, "and so it's difficult for us to comment on it."

"We have been working in a collaborative way with the state to try to work out a solution to the problem . . . The contamination appears to be confined within the boundaries of the property. We have not been told that it poses a threat to the drinking water. I think it probably would if some corrective action were not taken."

Olivieri said that the rankings did not take into account any cleanup efforts at the 46 locations. "All of the companies are in different phases of cleanup."

"But things (rankings) are going to change depending on the company's review. One of the intentions was not to say, 'This company is the baddest company.'" Olivieri says on the draft report are invited through March 15.

Reviewed records

However, Olivieri also pointed out that 53 companies were invited to review the board's records on 70 contaminated sites before the sites were ranked, and 82 percent of them took advantage of the opportunity.

"So, it's not going to be a significant number of companies that will argue with us," Olivieri said. Dalke, the toxics chief, said of the companies with the highest rankings, "We ought to make sure these are the cases that we need to really work on."

The report says that several others received high rankings "because of the high degree of uncertainty associated with the site." Those include Pacific Nursery, Avamtek of Santa Clara (10th) and Applied Materials of Santa Clara (13th).

The water board divided the study into two reports because of all the information that had to be reviewed.

Overall, the report used seven key factors to determine the rankings:

- Distance between the site and

WHERE THE DANGER IS

Chart shows how 46 contaminated sites in San Jose, Santa Clara and Sunnyvale rank in terms of their threat to drinking water. Researchers used seven weighted criteria to rank the sites. The maximum (or worst) score possible was 230. The sites are listed from most threatening to least threatening.

Company	Address	Score
1. Solvent Service	1021 Berryessa Rd., San Jose	193.50
2. IBM	5600 Cottle Rd., San Jose	175.50
3. Fairchild	101 Bernal Rd., San Jose	172.10
4. Van Waters & Rogers	2258 Junction Ave., San Jose	168.50
5. Pacific Nursery	1015 Martin Ave., Santa Clara	169.00
6. Nat'l Semiconductor	2800 Semiconductor Dr., Santa Clara	166.40
7. Megnax Corp.	6950 Santa Teresa Blvd., San Jose	163.30
8. Technical Coatings	1000 Welsh Ave., Santa Clara	160.80
9. Westinghouse	401 E. Hendy Ave., Sunnyvale	160.60
10. Avamtek Inc.	3175 Bowers Ave., Santa Clara	159.70
11. Lorentz Barrel & Drum	1515 S. 10th St., San Jose	157.50
12. TRW	825 Stewart Dr., Sunnyvale	156.40
13. Applied Materials	3050 Bowers Ave., Santa Clara	156.20
14. Signetics Corp.	811 E. Arques Ave., Sunnyvale	155.00
15. Memorex Corp.	1260 Memorex Dr., Santa Clara	154.60
16. Hewlett-Packard	974 E. Arques Ave., Sunnyvale	154.60
17. Xerox	305 Soquel Way, Sunnyvale	153.00
18. Signetics Corp.	860 Kifer Rd., Sunnyvale	153.00
19. AMD	901 Thompson Pl., Sunnyvale	152.00
20. Monsanto	2710 Lafayette St., Santa Clara	149.20
21. Precision Media	1262 N. Lawrence Station Rd., Sunnyvale	147.00
22. AMI	3900 Homestead Rd., Santa Clara	145.80
23. Spectra Physics	2905 Stender Way, Santa Clara	145.00
24. Precision Mono	1800 Space Park Dr., Santa Clara	144.60
25. Advanced LSI	639 N. Pastoria Ave., Sunnyvale	144.50
26. Intel	1276 Hemmerwood Ave., Sunnyvale	143.70
27. UTC	1050 E. Arques Ave., Sunnyvale	143.00
28. Fairchild	3105 Alfred St., Santa Clara	142.90
29. Verbatim Corp.	360 N. Pastoria Ave., Sunnyvale	142.00
30. Ampex Corp.	728 San Aleso, Sunnyvale	139.20
31. Circo	840 Hamlin Ct., Sunnyvale	136.00
32. KTI Chemicals	1120 Sonoma Ave., Sunnyvale	124.70
33. AMD	915 DeSigue Dr., Sunnyvale	133.50
34. Signetics Corp.	740 Kifer Rd., Sunnyvale	132.10
35. MMI	1165 E. Arques Ave., Sunnyvale	131.40
36. Dycan	5440 Patrick Henry Dr., Santa Clara	130.60
37. MMI	2175 Mission College Blvd., Santa Clara	129.80
38. Magnetic Peripherals	3333 Scott Blvd., Santa Clara	129.50
39. Synetek	3050 Coronado Blvd., Santa Clara	126.50
40. Enar-Integrated	750 Pelomar Ave., Sunnyvale	125.40
41. Intel-SC3	3000 Oakmead Pkwy., Santa Clara	122.80
42. Data General	433 N. Mathilda Ave., Sunnyvale	120.80
43. Hewlett-Packard	San Jose	119.70
44. Zynga	477 N. Mathilda Ave., Sunnyvale	117.40
45. Intel-Magnetics	2850 Northwestern Pkwy., Santa Clara	110.70
46. Dycan	5200 Patrick Henry Dr., Santa Clara	109.10

Source: San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board

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the point of water use.

- ✓ Extent of present water use.
- ✓ Depth to the underground water supplies and the porosity of the soil.
- ✓ The gradient or direction and angle of flow in the underground drinking water supply.

points). The highest or worst possible score for a site was 230.

Scores for the 46 ranked sites ranged from 193.5 for No. 1-ranked Solvent Service to 109.1 for Dycan, 5200 Patrick Henry Drive in Santa Clara.

Other sites

Wednesday's report discusses more than the 46 sites worthy of ranking. It also includes 11 sites where the water board investigated possible contamination and found none, and 15 others where the board has determined that no further action is necessary, except for continued monitoring.

The overall study is a cooperative effort of the water board, School of Public Health at the University of California at Berkeley and the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

✓ Toxicity of the chemicals that leaked.

✓ Physical and chemical properties of the chemicals.

✓ Magnitude of the contamination, including its concentration and number of chemicals involved.

The factors were weighted differently to arrive at a final score for each site. For example, the magnitude of the contamination carried the heaviest weight (50 maximum points), and the gradient of the drinking water supply carried the lightest (10 maximum