

Environmentalists beating drums for a new Superfund

By Mitchell Benson

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A national environmental coalition brought its campaign for a new federal Superfund law to Sunnyvale on Wednesday, pulling into town in a yellow Hertz truck loaded with 55-gallon drums.

John O'Connor, coordinator of the National Campaign Against Toxic Hazards and the driver of the Mack rig, is on a lobbying tour called "Superdrive for Superfund." He said Sunnyvale was the third stop for his truck, which is one of four that will visit 45 states during the next three weeks.

Some of the drums on O'Connor's truck were filled with signed petitions and letters to Congress asking it to reauthorize Superfund in the form that O'Connor and his coalition prefers. Many of the drums were empty, and others were filled with plain water to symbolize contaminated water from several of Santa Clara County's 19 Superfund sites.

The coalition is lobbying for a reauthorization of the federal Superfund law, a \$1.6 billion program created five years ago to regulate the cleanup of the country's worst hazardous-waste sites.

The law is scheduled to expire Sept. 30. A House bill intended to reauthorize Superfund proposes a \$10.1 billion program; a Senate version proposes a \$7.5 billion program. O'Connor said Wednesday that he wants a \$13.5 billion program that would for the first time:

- ✓ Set standards for how clean a site must be before cleanup can be deemed complete.

- ✓ Create mandatory timetables that cleanup programs must follow.

"There is no question that we'll get a new Superfund," O'Connor said. "By the first week of October, we'll have a new Superfund." However, O'Connor said he expects the final legislation to be a Senate-House compromise in the range of \$9 billion to \$10 billion.

O'Connor said the coalition decided to park its truck in front of the building where Rep. Ed Zschau, R-Los Altos, has an office because he and Ted Smith, chairman of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, wanted to put extra pressure on Zschau and California's Republican Sen. Pete Wilson.

O'Connor and Smith say the two legislators had not committed themselves to a reauthorization of the Superfund law. In addition,

they said, Zschau has more Superfund sites in his district — nine — than any other Congress member in the country.

Jim Burroughs, a legislative analyst for Wilson, said Wednesday that the senator generally supports the Senate version of the Superfund reauthorization bill, but wants to offer two amendments. One would limit the liability of farmers on pesticide-tainted sites and the other would create stricter controls on Department of Defense cleanup sites.

Wilson voted against Superfund reauthorization late last year, but aides explained then that the senator didn't object to the contents of the bill but to the procedure by which the Senate was attempting to pass it.

Dan Schnur, a spokesman for Zschau, said Wednesday that the congressman is withholding his position until a bill goes to the House floor.