

# Firms asked to curb toxic dumping

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Twenty-five major corporations with plants in Santa Clara County legally dump more than 12 million pounds of toxic and cancer-causing pollutants into the air, land and water each year, according to a study released Tuesday.

The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, which released the study, called on the companies to voluntarily cut in half — each year — the amount of hazardous substances that they use to make everything from integrated circuits to rocket fuel to the Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

"It's time that the companies stopped using the air as their sewer," said Ted Smith, the coalition's executive director. The study covered pollutants that are released into the air or discharged to sewage treatment plants, land fills, sumps and other locations.

Smith made a special plea for industry to cut back its use of Freon, one of the family of chlorofluorocarbons that is eating away the atmosphere's protective ozone layer. He said that eight companies are discharging more than 1.8 million pounds a year of the pollutant.

## Industry replies

Several industry officials said that they already are cutting back on the use of certain hazardous substances simply because it makes good business sense to reduce costs and liability. But many are not setting specific goals — at least of all those proposed by environmentalists. And they all emphasized that their pollutant discharge levels were all within legal limits.

"To imply that all of a sudden we have some major new problem with industry is a gross jump in the imagination," said Gary Burke,

president of the Santa Clara County Manufacturing Group. "It really borders on the unconscionable for (toxics coalition members) to literally promote fear and anxiety among our citizens as a means of achieving their goals."

Burke and others suggested that, for perspective, the pollution data be compared with pollutants released into the environment by other groups and individuals.

## Blames cars

"We do have an air emissions problem in the Santa Clara Valley, but the problem is not industry," he said. "The problem, frankly, is emissions from automobiles. And emissions from household use is considerably larger than from industry."

But Paul Brand, a spokesman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, said that raising a second concern does not solve the

first one.

"If I were still in enforcement," Brand said, "and an industry guy were to say that to me, I'd tell him, 'Come off it. . . . Let's talk about your problem.'"

The toxics coalition based its analysis on information that the companies are required to make public for the first time under a recent federal law.

The data supplied by the 25 companies — which includes most of the area's leading semiconductor and computer manufacturers — indicates that, overall, Advanced Micro Devices Inc. releases the most pollutants into the local environment.

## Standards called lax

Smith acknowledged that the amount of chemicals that the companies release is within federal re-

quirements. But he argued that there are federal standards for only a handful of toxic air contaminants and that those are too lax.

According to the study, the five most heavily dumped substances are sodium sulfate — 3 million pounds a year, Freon — 1.8 million pounds, sodium hydroxide — 1.8 million, sulfuric acid — 1.2 million, and 1,1,1-trichloroethane — 956,000 pounds.

The study said the International Business Machines Corp. plant in South San Jose is responsible for almost 1.5 million pounds of the 1.8 million pounds released annually.

IBM announced last month that it was developing a safe alternative to Freon to clean parts so sensitive that they can be ruined by a speck of dust. IBM officials have said the new method could reduce the plant's use of Freon by 30 percent within 18 months.

## Silicon Valley's major polluters

Here are the 12 companies with plants in Santa Clara County that release the largest amount of pollutants, according to data submitted under a federal law:

Company	Annual lbs.
AMD	2,745,000
Hewlett-Packard	2,025,253
IBM	1,874,530
National Semi.	1,219,303
Signetics	971,641
UTC	970,415
Lockheed	710,611
FMC	313,544
Linear Technology	233,800
Varian	169,588
Intel	143,365
Westinghouse	117,200

Source: Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition

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Mercury News Staff Writer Jac Fischer contributed to this report.