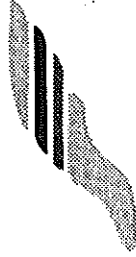


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**Mercury News**



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**Editorials**

Wednesday, Oct. 4, 1988

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## A promise made

Though the designation has changed, two toxic sites still need monitoring

**M**AYBE to the Environmental Protection Agency, \$50,000 is no big deal. But to a community-based organization that has hacked its way through a bureaucratic jungle for two years to win the grant, \$50,000 is a big deal.

Which is why the EPA should not be rescinding the grants it has awarded two such community groups in the South Bay.

The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition in San Jose and the Barron Park Association in Palo Alto are two of the first groups in the nation to win the grants, which Congress authorized to enable community groups to monitor the cleanup of hazardous waste sites. The San Jose group is monitoring the IBM site; the Palo Alto

group a Hewlett-Packard site in the Stanford Research Park.

Both applications had been approved, and both groups had the go-ahead to hire experts and start the program. Then last week the EPA took it all back.

Why? Because both sites were being moved off the Superfund list and into a category covered by another federal cleanup law. And the community grants are available only for Superfund sites.

We can't quarrel with EPA's reordering of its Superfund priorities, but the situation on site hasn't changed: Each neighborhood is still keenly concerned with a large, complex cleanup project and wants its own watchdog on the scene. The EPA must have funds in other, non-Superfund accounts that can be used to supplant the lost grants.

If the federal government believes there's any merit in improving community understanding of toxic cleanups and in enabling independent community oversight of the cleanups, then it won't abandon these two grass-roots efforts.