

# Environmentalists rap UTC

## Quick cleanup of toxics asked

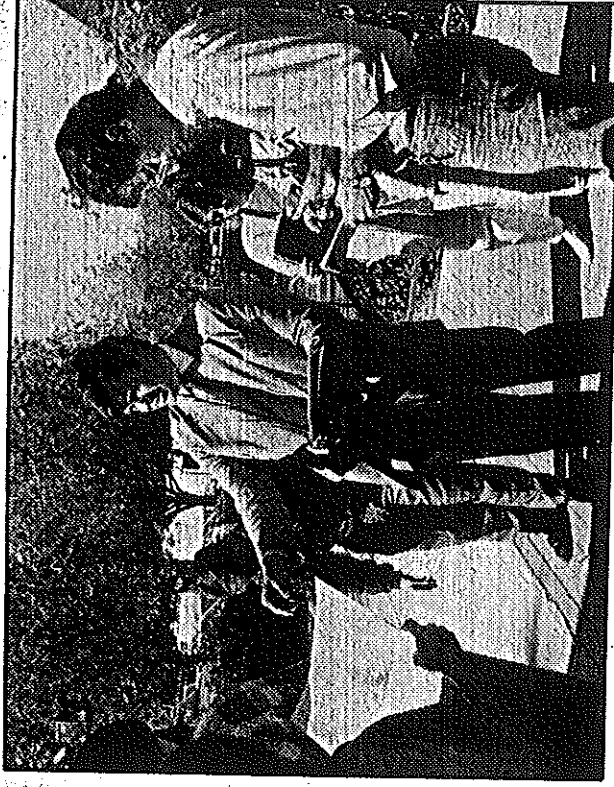
By Cathie Calvert  
Mercury News Staff Writer

Environmental groups Tuesday charged that United Technologies Corp. is endangering Anderson Reservoir, a prime source of water in Santa Clara County.

At a morning news conference outside the Santa Clara County Water District office in San Jose, Ted Smith, of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, said that the government has paid insufficient attention to the company's cleanup of contaminated groundwater moving toward the reservoir from the plant southeast of San Jose.

Environmentalists called the gathering, before a meeting of the Santa Clara Valley Water

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Richard Wisdom — Mercury News

Ted Smith, center, of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, hands out material at Tuesday protest gathering.

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# Environmentalists target UTC

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District board, six days after the rocket-fuel manufacturer spilled an estimated 10,000 gallons of contaminated groundwater into a dry creek that leads to the reservoir.

United Technologies has been pumping the water from the ground to keep it from spreading farther in the direction of the reservoir, a half mile away. The water beneath the plant is laced with the cancer-causing solvent trichloroethylene.

The spill went undetected for eight hours because the shutoff valve on a tank collecting the water for decontamination wasn't properly set, company officials said.

Roger James, operations and water quality manager for the water district, said the spill "is not significant at this point." Because the creek bed is dry, the

contaminated water quickly seeped back into the ground. The reservoir also is largely empty at this point.

James added, however, that he is "not comfortable with UTC's spill response."

Jim Safranek, of the South Bay Greens Alliance, put it more bluntly. "The community does not trust UTC," he said.

United Technologies officials vowed it would clean up the tainted underground water regardless of cost. Ron Michalak, the company's director for environmental compliance, said the bulk of the contamination will be cleaned up within one year. He said it will take three to four years to rid the site of remaining underground contamination.

Michalak said \$4 million has been spent on cleanup since January and another \$1 million will be spent by the end of the year.

The company's presentation to the water district board on the status of its cleanup efforts was scheduled before the spill last week.

The board endorsed a proposal that UTC develop a spill containment plan and be prepared to immediately notify the necessary agencies anytime a spill occurs that could potentially affect creeks leading into Anderson Reservoir.

The giant reservoir, the largest in the district, provides drinking water to many of the 1.4 million residents of Santa Clara County.

Steven Ritchie, executive officer of the state Regional Water Quality Control Board, has asked for a report in writing on last week's spill. The board could impose a fine as high as \$100,000 once it reviews the company's response.

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