

# Health study to focus on chip firms

Research in U.S.  
to involve 50,000  
working in industry

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SAN FRANCISCO — More than 50,000 workers will participate in a nationwide study of health risks in the computer-chip industry the Semiconductor Industry Association said Friday.

The \$3.5 million study was prompted by a study two years ago that found an increased level of miscarriages among pregnant women at a Digital Equipment Corp. plant in Massachusetts.

Association President Andrew Procassini said the Digital study "raised important concerns that need to be answered."

Researchers from the University of California at Davis will study semiconductor workers for reproductive and other health

problems associated with the chemicals used in manufacturing computer chips.

In the three-year study, researchers will use historical data to test for an increased rate of miscarriages among women in manufacturing. The researchers also will follow current workers' pregnancies and compare them with women who are not involved in the manufacturing process.

The study will test for infertility problems among male workers and general health problems among all workers. Researchers will study the manufacturing environment to determine whether problems are caused by chemicals or other factors, such as the amount of time workers spend on their feet.

The study involves 17 semiconductor manufacturers, including Intel Corp., which has a chip-manufacturing facility in the Phoenix area. Others planning to take part are Advanced Micro Devices, American Telephone & Telegraph Co., Digital Equipment Corp., National Semiconductor Corp., Signetics and VLSI Technology.

However, some of the largest semiconductor manufacturers in the country will not participate, including Motorola Inc., which has its chip-manufacturing headquarters in Phoenix; Texas Instruments Inc.; and IBM. Motorola is contributing money to the association study.

A spokesman for Motorola, one of the largest U.S. chip makers, said the company feels its own health monitoring will be more comprehensive.

Hewlett-Packard Co. is donating money as well, but not workers. The company said it has only a few hundred workers in semiconductor manufacturing and did not consider itself a major manufacturer.

The Santa Clara Center for Health and Occupational Safety, a "Silicon Valley" watchdog group, said the lack of participation by major companies indicates flaws in the study.

"If they don't have confidence in it, what kind of validity does it have?" Director Alicia Orosco asked.