

Toxic cleanup laws not being used, activist charges

By Michael Shear
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Federal laws aimed at controlling hazardous waste are "simply not being used" in the South Bay, despite an increasing number of toxic sites, the leader of a watchdog group said at a packed hearing Saturday morning.

"The Environmental Protection Agency is making an effort, but it falls far short of what we need," Ted Smith, executive director of

'In the rush to develop new technology, we have gone a long way toward contaminating' our environment, Smith said.

the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, told almost 200 area residents.

Smith made the comments at a public hearing called by Rep. Tom

Campbell, R-Sunnyvale.

Jerry Clifford, a representative for the EPA, countered Smith's statements, saying the Superfund

law, which provides strict sanctions for polluters who don't clean up toxic sites, "is unquestionably the strongest environmental law we have."

And Jacqueline Bogard, who represents more than 90 companies in the Silicon Valley, said "there is a lot being done" by industry to clean up the sites, and assured the audience that "your public drinking water system is protected."

But Smith said that, while the



Campbell



Smith

level of toxics in most public wells meets government standards, the

problem is constantly getting worse.

"In the rush to develop new technology, we have gone a long way toward contaminating" our environment, he said.

Campbell, who asked for the "town meeting" to assess the pace of the cleanup, said legislation might be necessary to "give incentives to companies to clean up spills more quickly and more thoroughly."