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## Toxic waste threatens San Jose area's water

Pollution creeping  
toward reservoir

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Toxic chemicals leaking into the groundwater from a military contractor's plant threaten a reservoir serving a quarter of Santa Clara County.

A host of chemicals — at least one designated as a probable human carcinogen — has been found in water in the remote 8-square-

mile site of the United Technologies Corp. plant in the hills south of San Jose.

The solvents trichloroethylene, or TCE, trichloroethane and freon were found in January near the property boundary, only one-fourth to one-half mile from the Anderson Reservoir.

The public learned of the threat to the reservoir only this week.

The 30 billion-gallon — or 92,000 acre-foot — reservoir is filled by rainfall and imported fed-

[ See PLUME, A-24 ]

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## Pollution threatens San Jose's water

eral Central Valley Project water.

An important underground recharge basin near the reservoir is also in danger of contamination from the moving toxic plume. For 40 years, the Santa Clara Valley Water District has recharged extra water from the reservoir into the ground. The recharging cleans and stores the water for use in the summer, when it is pumped from wells to households.

United Technologies, a con-

glomerate that manufactures rockets and jet engines, is installing monitoring wells between its property line and the reservoir to determine how far the chemical plume may have traveled toward the reservoir.

A company spokesman said a cleanup of the site, which includes 180 buildings, might cost an estimated \$20 million.

United Technologies has known about its own on-site groundwater contamination since 1982, according to state documents.

Suspected sources are up to 50 ponds, pits and other disposal sites used over the last 30 years before

the dumping was illegal. In some areas, the TCE reaches 10,000 parts per billion, 2,000 times the 5 part per billion drinking water standard.

Besides the solvents, the water contains benzene, toluene, xylene, perchloroethylene and the breakdown products of TCE. The chemicals are harmful to humans with adverse effects ranging from cancer to central nervous system damage.

Regional water quality officer Steve Ritchie said Thursday the state and federal agencies had been aware of problems for 10 years.

But until January, they weren't

successful in getting the company to actually test groundwater at the property line.

Asked why, Ritchie said United Technologies, as well as other companies, didn't believe that their waste chemicals traveled that far, and "they don't want to spend the money."

Ron Michalak, director of environmental compliance at United Technologies, said the company hadn't tested near the property boundary closest to the Anderson reservoir because "I don't think we really thought something was there."

In January, the San Francisco

Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board ordered United Technologies to evaluate the extent of the contamination and clean it up by October 1990.

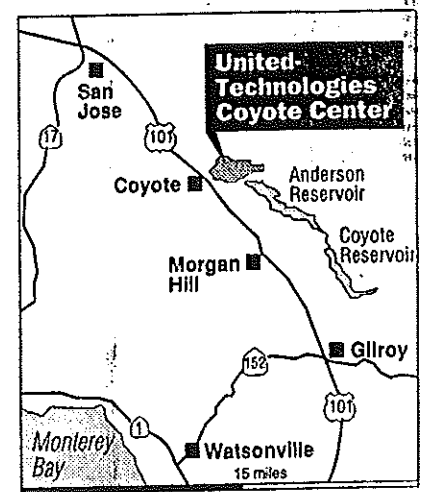
The state was urged to act by the Santa Clara Valley Water District, which owns the reservoir, according to David Chesterman, a district spokesman.

The tests revealed that the chlorinated solvents had migrated there — at levels under 100 parts per billion.

United Technologies has pledged to start cleanup by this October, one year before the date in the state order, Michalak said.

The \$20 million effort would pump and clean groundwater. Another consideration is digging a trench across a narrow canyon to build a barrier to stop the onslaught of the contaminated water.

The Chemical Systems Division of United Technologies is a research, development and production company in the field of propellants, rockets and advanced propulsion systems. Stages of the Trident



missile are manufactured at the site.

Ted Smith, director of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, said he believed that United Technologies' involvement in the missile program made it "an untouchable company," shielded from environmental regulation.

Ritchie denied it, saying the company's weapons program had nothing to do with slow regulation.