

'Stone-age' recipients are shelled

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SAN JOSE

Just when you thought you'd heard enough about Earth Day or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, members of a toxics coalition combined the two and started a debate Thursday.

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition officials announced that "Stone-age" Mutant Ninja Turtle awards would be given to local companies they call "laggards" in eliminating the use of ozone-depleting chemicals.

No one from Lockheed Missiles & Space Co. Inc., FMC, DuPont or any of the other Bay Area companies showed up to receive the renamed plastic turtles. The unusual name of the awards was explained by coalition officials at the

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end of a news conference in San Jose.

When contacted by phone, company representatives said they are trying to control emissions of CFCs and that they resent the criticism.

"It's very easy to call names when there are great efforts being made to reduce emissions," said Bob Burgess, manager of the news bureau for Lockheed.

Burgess said he understands the concerns of the coalition, but "we've made significant reductions in the use of (chlorofluorocarbons)."

Not nearly enough reductions, said coalition officials, who also awarded five companies with most-improved awards — the result of a recent study — before explaining the significance of "Stone-age" Mutant Ninja Turtles.

"Stone-age" refers to companies that are stuck in the Stone Age when it comes to eliminating chlorofluorocarbons, said Micheal Belliveau of Citizens for a Better Environment, and mutations will occur on the planet if the chemicals continue to destroy the ozone. "We need to kick some shell," if these companies don't improve, Belliveau said.

Craig Merlees of the National Toxics Campaign waved a special award for Defense Secretary Dick

Cheney, because "the military requires that defense contractors use the chemicals that destroy the ozone layer as the price of doing business with the Pentagon," he said.

Merlees said Cheney wins the "Golden Doughnut Award" — a small flag with a picture of the Earth on it, its stick stuck through the holes of seven doughnuts.

Merlees pulled a doughnut off the stick and explained the significance of the strange award.

"That is the shape of the ozone layer at the (Earth's) poles," he said. The hole "symbolizes the empty space between the ears of some of the officials at the Pentagon."

Steve Hill, a manager for the Bay Area Air Quality Management, said that while defense contractors are not on the cutting edge of reducing emissions, they are proceeding cautiously.

Coalition officials urged people to use the spirit of Earth Day constructively by signing a petition to get the Environmental Protection Initiative on the November ballot.

The coalition praised Hewlett-Packard Co. of Palo Alto, Apple Computer Inc. of Cupertino, IBM in San Jose, Raychem in Menlo Park and Emerald Packaging of Berkeley as "leaders" in controlling emissions or setting phase-out deadlines.

Varian of Palo Alto and NUMMI in Fremont also made the laggard list.