

San Francisco Examiner  
**BUSINESS**

Rick Heldebrant is the new president and chief executive of the San Francisco City Employees' Credit Union. (C-2)



◆ LAWSUIT from C-1

**Firms charged with leaking chemicals**

and extent of the hazardous impact of the resultant plume upon their homes and property through the news media in 1991." In May, the Regional Water Quality Control Board held a public meeting to discuss groundwater cleanup efforts by the companies.

The area was designed a priority cleanup site in 1984 by the Environmental Protection Agency, which has put the site on its "superfund" list as one of the nation's worst toxic waste sites.

Though acknowledging chemical leakage, Advanced Micro Devices Inc. vigorously denied the allegations.

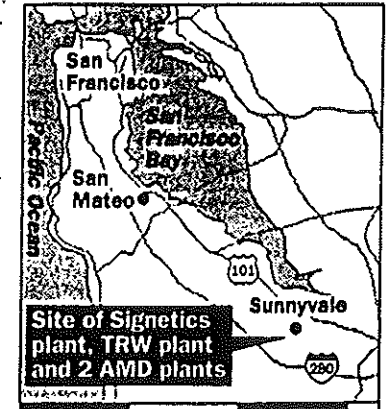
"We believe our performance dealing with the ground water problem has been exemplary," said John Greenagel, an AMD spokesman. "Specifically, AMD discovered the problem at the beginning, and we began immediate remediation."

Greenagel says the company realized there was a problem in 1981 and immediately came forward. He says a cleanup has made "significant progress," but admits that it may take 20 to 30 years before all traces of the toxic chemicals disappear from the drinking water.

Greenagel also says a study done for the companies disproves the residents' claim in the suit that the plume is emitting vaporized toxic gases.

Michael Eagan, an attorney for the residents, says that chemicals were probably leaking in the 1960s and 1970s from pipes and storage tanks of chemicals both before and after they were used at the corporations.

The residents, who live in a middle-income neighborhood with 1,500- to 1,800-square-foot houses valued at between \$120,000 and



10 miles EXAMINER GRAPHICS

\$250,000, fear that their property values have been reduced and that the problem could get worse.

Eagan says he doesn't have any proof that the plume has affected the health of residents. He says it may take years for health problems to become apparent, and even then it would be difficult to attribute to the toxic chemicals.

However, it is clear that the toxic plume has had a "chilling effect" on homebuyers.

"It's counter-intuitive that you would pay as much for a house atop a plume of chemicals as you would in a (unaffected) neighborhood not so far away," said Eagan. "We've seen in the last few months a virtual inability to sell a house there."

*Kathleen Sullivan of The Examiner staff contributed to this report.*

**Living atop a toxic 'plume'**

**Residents accuse electronics firms of poisoning ground**

By Paul Freiberger  
 OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Hundreds of Sunnyvale homeowners have accused three Silicon Valley electronics firms with spreading toxic chemicals through-

out their neighborhood and creating a poisonous "plume" that has reduced their property values and caused unknown health consequences.

A class action lawsuit filed Tuesday in Santa Clara Superior Court on behalf of the residents alleges that contaminants leaked into the ground as early as the 1970s from Advanced Micro Devices Inc., TRW Inc. and Signetics Corp., and that the chemicals have

continued to spread in their neighborhood, which is within a mile and a half of the companies.

It is the second lawsuit filed this month on behalf of homeowners who live above toxic waste plumes in Santa Clara County. The earlier suit was filed against Westinghouse.

The suit filed Tuesday, which seeks unspecified damages, charges that the firms knew of the discharge of hazardous materials used

to make computer chips, which are used in a wide variety of electronic devices.

The lawsuit charges that the plume created by the toxic waste was "recently discovered to be emitting vaporized toxic gases through the soil into the air surrounding the affected area."

The suit says the homeowners "were left to discover the nature

[ See LAWSUIT, C-4 ]