

METRO PLUS

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Emissions Monitoring Too Costly: Intel

State Officials Seek Constant Measurement

By Seth Brechtel

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

RIO RANCHO — An expert for Intel Corp. testified that a state Environment Department request that the company continuously monitor carbon monoxide emissions from its new boiler system was an unnecessary expense.

The request is part of negotiations between Intel and the Environment Department on revising an

existing air permit and issuing a new one as part of the giant computer-chip producer's \$1.8 billion expansion plan.

"We are not aware of any reason why we should go to this great expense to measure carbon monoxide emissions," said Gale Hoffnagle, an air quality expert with TRC Environmental Corp.

Hoffnagle said that purchasing and maintaining monitors for the company's 12 boilers could exceed \$1.5 million in the first year.

Hoffnagle also argued that the costly equipment was unnecessary because a much simpler and equally accurate method of measuring emissions already exists.

Most facilities in the country that are asked to determine carbon monoxide emissions use a formula based on how much natural gas was burned at what setting, he said.

Many area residents attending the second night of Intel air permit hearings at City Hall were not convinced.

"Why can't some portion of Intel's assets be spent on state of the art monitoring and air quality equipment?" an angry Corrales resident asked.

Others accused Intel of placing its own monetary concerns above the community's health.

However, Hoffnagle pointed out that the carbon monoxide emission from the boilers was well below the 100 tons per year limit it and the Environment Department agreed on.

Individuals who testified were divided into two camps: those who claimed to suffer headaches and illnesses due to Intel emissions, and

those who credited the company with dragging the community out of years of economic woes.

Several area residents complained of smelling noxious odors in their homes and getting headaches.

"The bottom line is that we're asking Intel to spend more money than is required by federal law. If they don't, they're putting a dollar value on the health of local citizens," a woman who lives half a mile from the plant said.

But another Intel neighbor said critics are part of a "vocal minority that wants to sabotage any progressive ideas that come our way."

In the end, as the public comment period ended, cooler heads prevailed as many residents called for an end to the bickering for the good of the community.

The hearings, which began on Thursday, were to conclude Friday. However, a spokesman for the Environment Department said more time is needed to allow all experts to offer testimony.

A third hearing is scheduled for Thursday, again in the City Council chambers. Environment Department experts will testify from 1 to 5 p.m., and Intel witnesses will speak from 6:30 to 10 p.m.