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20 local sites reportedly added to Superfund list

By Mitchel Benson
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Twenty locations in the Bay Area, including 19 in Santa Clara County, have been proposed for the Superfund list of the nation's worst hazardous-waste sites, according to a list made public Friday.

The 20 sites would be the first in the Santa Clara Valley added to Superfund

since the federal Environmental Protection Agency began the program's National Priorities List in the summer of 1981. In all, the list released Friday names 34 sites in California, more than in any other state.

By adding a site to its Superfund list, the EPA is not necessarily saying that the site poses an immediate threat to public health, water, air or land. The agency rates a site according to a complex rank-

ing system that also takes into account the site's potential threat.

Rep. James J. Florio, D-N.J., released the list of private sites as well as a second EPA list Friday of 34 federally owned and operated sites that need to be cleaned up. It includes the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and five other sites in the state.

Ben Everidge, a spokesman for Florio,

said Friday that the congressman obtained the lists Thursday from several officials of the Environmental Protection Agency "who we know and we trust, and we believe these sites are accurate." The list of 203 private sites was dated Monday.

The list includes the sites of the Santa Clara Valley's better-known pollution problems, including:

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Civic CRX hatchback has topped the Environmental Protection Agency's annual mileage derby for the second year in a row.

The 1985 CRX is rated by the EPA at 49 miles per gallon in city driving and 54 mpg on the highway.

In second place is the 1985 Chevrolet Sprint hatchback, rated at 47 mpg in the city and 53 mpg on the highway.

Official results of the 1985 EPA Mileage Guide will be released Monday. The Detroit Free Press obtained ratings on the top cars Friday from industry sources.

The CRX and the Sprint are both gasoline-engine models. Both subcompacts are built in Japan; the Sprint is imported from Suzuki Motor Co., a General Motors affili-

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20 area sites reportedly added to EPA cleanup list

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International Business Machines Inc. in South San Jose, which state officials have linked to the contamination of eight private and eight public water wells. The company already has spent \$20 million in cleanup efforts.

Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corp. of South San Jose, which state officials have linked to the contamination of one public well. The company has spent an estimated \$16 million in its cleanup efforts.

Teledyne Semiconductor of Mountain View, which state officials have linked to the contamination of 45 private wells. The company has spent about \$65,000 to hook up virtually all the families that relied on the wells to the city water system.

Everidge and Ted Smith, chairman of the local Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, both said Florio deserved praise for releasing the list because it proves that such a list has been completed but that the Reagan administration was delaying its release for political purposes.

Florio claims that Reagan wanted to release the list after the Nov. 6 election to avoid alarming voters who might live near the sites. Smith, on the other hand, claims that Reagan wanted to release the list just before the election to show that his administration is concerned about the environment.

Smith added that Florio's release of the list "is helpful so people at least have an idea of where EPA thinks the most serious problems are."

However, Dave Cohen, a spokesman for the agency, said Friday that the list has not been released simply because the agency has not finished it. Agency officials have said the update should be out by mid-October at the latest.

List being reviewed

Cohen, reading from a statement, said, "The agency is currently reviewing for accuracy the site list Mr. Florio released today. Until that review is complete, EPA cannot attest to its accuracy. At this time, it is not certain that all the sites on the list undergoing agency review will be included in the proposed list of new sites or that other sites may not be added."

As for allegations that the EPA

is intentionally delaying the release of the list, Cohen said, "If anything, just the opposite is true. We've been killing ourselves to try to get the list done."

Cohen said Lee Thomas, who heads the EPA's Superfund program, announced Sept. 12 that the updated list would be out within two to four weeks of that date.

"We're certainly breaking our necks here to make good on that," Cohen said.

Coincidentally, three Santa Clara Valley congressmen had scheduled a meeting for Friday afternoon with EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus to discuss the Valley's ground water contamination.

List not final

Rep. Ed Zschau, R-Los Altos, said Ruckelshaus was sorry that Florio released the list because it was not final and because supporting documents have not yet been prepared that explain why each of the sites has been listed.

From his discussions with Ruckelshaus, Zschau said he understood that Florio's release "is not the complete list. But I would say it's very close."

Zschau said the EPA might add other sites around the country to the list before it releases a final version. He said he had no idea whether the additions would include any in the Santa Clara Valley.

The congressman said it is "less likely" that any of the sites on the list released Friday will be removed before EPA releases its final version.

Officials of the EPA regional office in San Francisco said in August that they had proposed 13 to 20 Santa Clara Valley sites to the agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C., as additions to the next Superfund update. They have declined to reveal the identities of those sites.

Sites on another list

The EPA in San Francisco has indicated that virtually all of the 13 to 20 sites are also on a list of about 140 Bay Area toxic pollution cases compiled by state officials. About 120 of those are in the Santa Clara Valley.

If a site is added to the Superfund list, the EPA can assist or administer its cleanup. But in the Santa Clara Valley, agency officials and industry representatives

have indicated that won't be necessary because businesses are willing to clean up their own pollution problems.

The EPA can spend its money and resources on an unlisted site only in an emergency.

But the three Santa Clara Valley congressmen scheduled to meet with Ruckelshaus — Zschau and Reps. Norman Mineta and Don Edwards, both D-San Jose — and Smith's Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition have been pressuring the EPA to take a more active role and to speed up the cleanup actions.

At most of the 20 sites released Friday, underground chemical storage tanks have begun leaking, but the chemicals have not reached drinking water wells and supplies. That's largely because the chemicals must leak or eat their way through thick layers of clay underground to reach drinking water supplies.

Wells contaminated

But such leaking chemicals have already contaminated some public and private drinking wells. And the long-term concern is that the leaking chemicals will find their way to abandoned wells, which might hasten the movement of the chemicals down to drinking water supplies.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District has begun a program to seal those private wells, but officials said recently that some well owners have refused to allow the water district to do the job.

Florio, sponsor of the original Superfund legislation, also is sponsoring a bill to continue and expand the program. The House in August approved Florio's bill to expand the five-year, \$1.6 billion program, which expires on Sept. 30, 1985, to \$10.2 billion over the following five years.

Earlier this month, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved a \$7.5 billion Superfund expansion. That bill is awaiting action by the Finance Committee, which must decide how to raise tax money for an expanded Superfund.

There are 538 sites on the EPA's current national priority list for Superfund cleanup. The EPA is required to update the list annually. This year's revision was due Sept. 8.

