

permanent attraction

Protesters rally against tire burning

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SANTA CRUZ — Greenpeace and other environmental activists claim opposition is mounting against a proposal by RMC Lonestar Co. to burn tires along with coal as fuel for its Davenport cement plant.

More than 50 protesters rallied Tuesday in front of the County Government Center and submitted 1,500 signatures on petitions urging county officials to deny Lonestar's request for an amended use permit allowing tire burning at the plant.

"We're here today to let the county know and Lonestar know that ... when you burn tires, there will be poison," said Bradley Angel, the toxics campaign coordinator for Greenpeace in San Francisco.

Lonestar, which uses coal as fuel for its cement-making process, is asking to use tires for no more than 30 percent of its overall fuel supply. The company maintains that the proposal, which would mean about 10,000 tires a day would be burned, will help with the disposal problem of tires while using an alternative energy source.

Though the tire-burning proposal has been in the making for several years, it is still in the application process and has yet to be set for approval by the county and the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District.

County and Air Pollution Control District officials recently received results from the latest emissions test on "whole tire burning" at the plant. They declined to comment on the report pending an analysis.

From the results of a preliminary test completed last year, county officials found that there was no significant increase in the overall health impact in a comparison between coal burning alone and the mixture of coal and tires.

Protesters said however, that the test results did show a higher toxic emission rate for certain chemicals when tires were used as fuel.

Lonestar officials did not return a phone call Tuesday.

Marilyn Hummel, a board member of the Rural Bonny Doon Association, said she and other association members will not take a stand on the proposal until all the test results are in.

"I think it's a little premature to condemn the thing when we don't know what the results are," she said.