

## SV fears water contamination

By KAREN CLARK  
Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — The clock is ticking on any single-wall underground tanks that store hazardous chemicals as council members look to protect the Santa Margarita aquifer, the only source of drinking water available.

Last week, council members asked staff to prepare recommendations on the underground tanks that would be even more stringent than those required by state and federal law.

John Justice, hazardous materials officer for the Scotts Valley Fire District, said the council wants to consider an ordinance requiring double-wall construction on all underground storage tanks as soon as possible.

"We were the first jurisdiction to come up with a hazardous materials ordinance, but we appear to have fallen behind now," said Vice Mayor Joe Miller.

At stake is protection of the city's drinking water, which already has faced contamination problems, most notably at the old Camp Evers site at Scotts Valley Drive and Mount Hermon Road that was discovered in the late 1980s.

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— Mayor Michael Shulman

Justice said four gasoline stations used to occupy that area (three remain), and "there has been quite a contamination problem emanating from that intersection to three city wells." Regional water-control officials have insisted the cleanup be completed now, with blame to be settled later, said Justice.

"The vulnerability of our aquifer requires that we go beyond the minimum state standards," said Mayor Michael Shulman, noting the city already is "in danger of having a (regional) water agency step in and make land-use decisions for us."

Shulman was referring to a request from state Sen.

Henry Mello, D-Watsonville, that Scotts Valley, the county and all water districts drawing from the Santa Margarita aquifer reach a formal agreement to work together to protect the groundwater supply or he would seek legislation forming a regional water board.

Justice said the type of soil in the Scotts Valley area makes it difficult to contain a hazardous leak to one location — another reason the city should pass more stringent requirements for all underground tanks.

"It has been brought to the forefront because the water district has ... a groundwater management plan ... that calls for the regulations to be scrutinized," said Justice.

Of the 35 underground storage tanks in Scotts Valley, all but 12 of them are double-walled, said Justice.

Of the 12 single-walled tanks, one of them is to be converted soon and five are expected to be removed. The remaining six single-walled underground storage tanks are at the Quik Stop market at 5400 Scotts Valley Drive and the Hacienda Shell at 1 Hacienda Drive.

"We don't know of any (underground) tanks at private houses," said Justice. "And we're not aware of any abandoned (private) tanks."