

# Local cities, county *HAZARDOUS MATERIALS* take preventive steps

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SANTA CRUZ Local municipalities are not experiencing the same level of danger from toxic wastes and materials as others around the state, but that does not mean the problem is being taken any less seriously.

Government officials familiar with county and city policies on hazardous materials say Santa Cruz has avoided the problems of such places as neighboring Santa Clara County because it does not have the same level of industrialization as other counties around the state.

Also, the population density and geographic make-up of Santa Cruz County make it a highly unlikely place to locate a hazardous waste-dump site, which have proved to be among the biggest dangers in terms of exposure to hazardous waste and materials.

Presently, most of the estimated 8,300 tons in hazardous waste produced in the county must be disposed outside of the area, especially at the Class I dumpsite at Kettleman Hills in the San Joaquin Valley.

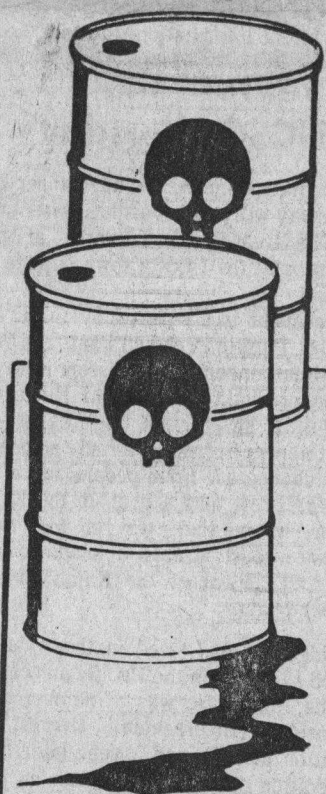
The possibility of toxic wastes being unearthed or dumped in a dangerous location, however, has local officials concerned. This has led to the formation of a task force and a call for a unified policy on toxics by the five local governments in the county.

"There's a lot of people who don't agree on a lot of things in this county, but I think we all agree on the need to address the issue" of hazardous materials management, said Gary Smith, the Watsonville Fire Chief. "I think we're getting a good handle on it."

At the moment, county government is pursuing a three-pronged attack on hazardous materials, the prime focus being a proposed ordinance which would require businesses in the area to account for all hazardous material from the time of purchase to the moment of disposal.

Ray Talley, chief of county Environmental Health, said the ordinance will be before the board sometime in the next few weeks and marks "a more aggressive stance on hazardous waste" than any time previously.

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California's  
toxic  
timebomb

## Preventive steps

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He said this ordinance was a complement to two other statutes currently in effect. One requires companies to disclose whatever hazardous material they have and the other requires those with underground storage tanks (mostly gas stations) to acquire a permit for hazardous materials storage.

The county has also entered into a new state Department of Health Services project which will drill test wells to tap into county water systems to monitor for possible contamination.

Talley said this was not an indication that there is something wrong with the county's drinking water, but a preventive measure to warn of future problems and to see the effect past waste-disposal practices might have had.

The test results, he said, should be available in the next few months.

"The goal is to ultimately have a complete waste management system," in the county, Talley said.

The cities of Santa Cruz and Capitola, he said, contract with the county for their environmental health work and will more than likely follow the same policies as the county adopts.

The toughest ordinance in the county appears to be in Scotts Valley, which issues permits not only for underground storage but also for above-ground storage.

Companies and individuals storing haz-

ardous materials must also provide plans for storage, handling, disposal, clean-up, monitoring for leaks, and secondary containment of the materials, said Bob Geyer, of the Scotts Valley Hazardous Materials Office.

Geyer said his city's ordinance is more stringent than the proposed county ordinance. If the county upgrades the controls on its proposal than Scotts Valley would follow suit, he said.

Geyer said in some instances companies have had to install elaborate monitoring systems which have cost, depending on the quantity and type of materials being stored, from several hundred dollars to several thousand for one company.

Talley said that while the county ordinance is not as specific as the Scotts Valley plan, the result of controlling hazardous material and making industry accountable is still the same.

He said the county is also trying to educate the public that the problem is in hazardous materials, including such things as paint thinners, solvents, and pesticides, and not just the waste product.

To address the domestic hazardous materials problem, a collection program for such items is slated for the fall. Over three weekends, in late September and early October, residents will be allowed to bring such materials to designated locations in the county for disposal at the Kettleman Hills dumps.