

VCF ENVIRONMENT 2P 4/21/89

Activist group urges support for proposed anti-toxics laws

By RICHARD EGAN
STAFF WRITER

Armed with the latest statistics reporting the amount of toxics that were disposed into the nation's land, sea and air in 1987, a coalition of local activists launched a campaign yesterday to control and eliminate the use of such pollutants.

The California Public Interest Research Group, Santa Cruz County Supervisor Gary Patton and a representative from the Gray Panthers called a press conference on the bluffs overlooking the ocean on West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz, with a 30-gallon drum containing dry ice

emitting "smoke" as a prop.

CALPIRG campaign director Kerry Bader cited federal Environmental Protection Agency statistics for 1987 showing that industry released 22.5 billion pounds of toxic chemicals into the nation's environment that year. CALPIRG said that 351,688 pounds of toxics were released in Santa Cruz County, three-quarters of it into the air.

"The EPA calls the results of the national report unacceptably high and startling, yet they offer no plan to solve this problem," Bader said. "Rather than wait at the end of the pipe with a leaky bucket to catch another 22.5 billion pounds of toxics, why not turn down the tap? We suggest industries reduce their use of toxics."

Toward that end, Bader said that the State Legislature has the opportunity to get the ball rolling by passing the Toxics Truth Act

(AB 1728) and the Toxics Use Reduction Institute Act (AB 1430).

The bills, which would aid state agencies in understanding which toxic materials are in use and which toxic wastes are being generated, are scheduled for their first hearing in the next three weeks in the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee.

Patton said that industry can't be totally held to blame for the pollution that pervades our society.

"We have built an entire civilization on the use of toxics at the household level," Patton said. "We are all deeply and personally involved. To see that all you have to do is look through your medicine chest, cleaning materials, and the pesticides used in your garden."

Patton said that a public hearing on the possibility of phasing out the use of polystyrene plastics in this county will be included in the supervisors' May 23 agenda.

"It's not a simple issue," Patton said. "We're trying to get a recommendation from county counsel focusing on food materials. It's hard to cover everything."

It was agreed it would be virtually impossible to stop all use of polystyrene plastic in Santa Cruz County because it is used so widely. It would be difficult, for example, to refuse to allow any typewriters packed in polystyrene to be shipped into this county.