

# Salz Tannery president denies Nader allegations

The president of Salz Tannery in Santa Cruz said this morning his company had been "bum rapped" by a report issued by a Ralph Nader-sponsored consumer organization.

The report listed Salz Tannery as one of 249 industrial organizations in the nation where government studies had shown that hazardous substances were used but where the companies had failed to notify the employees of the findings.

As far as Salz Tannery is concerned, said Salz president Norman Lezin, that charge is, in a word, false.

The disputed report was released yesterday by the Public Citizen Health Research Group, one of the organizations founded by Nader as a part of his professed crusade to protect consumers against alleged corporate irresponsibility.

The gist of the charge is that the Reagan Administration has refused to notify as many as 250,000 workers at 249 industrial sites — including 14 in California — that studies of their plants revealed that they were

being exposed to hazardous substances that have been linked to cancer and other health problems.

Lezin said that in the case of Salz Tannery, Nader must be referring to a study made by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in 1977. Lezin said Salz cooperated fully with NIOSH in that study, which was concentrated on whether the use of the chemical benzidine in the tanning process constituted a hazard to the workers.

Benzidine, Lezin noted, was suspected of being a carcinogen (cancer-causing agent).

"We welcomed the investigators," who arrived in November, 1977, Lezin said. He said that "with the cooperation of our management and union, we rearranged our work schedule to concentrate" a disproportionate amount of the work in the areas where benzidine had been used, "hoping thereby to cause any possible problem to surface."

Lezin said the workers who had handled the products were monitored and their urine ana-

lyzed for signs of chemical ingestion.

The results, he said, were that "the amount of benzidine found in the sample was undetectable." Further, said Lezin, contrary to the Nader charge, those results were communicated to all the employees by letter from NIOSH. Lezin said he has copies of the NIOSH letter.

Beyond that, said the president of the oldest operating leather tannery in the state, the use of benzidine was discontinued by his plant in 1978, because of continuing questions surrounding its safety.

"The charges, direct and implied," made by the Nader operation "are false and grossly misleading," Lezin said.

He said that Salz Tannery operates "a safe plant," and that with the cooperation of the employees "we investigate every possible danger area."

"If the other Nader accusations are at the same level as these," Lezin said, "I would seriously question both the credibility as well as the integrity of the Nader group."