

On Watkins-Johnson property *Pollution* *6-28-88* *Hazardous Materials*

# Second find of toxic waste

SCOTTS VALLEY — A second find of suspected cancer-causing chemicals has been made on Watkins-Johnson property.

Watkins-Johnson officials met with Regional Water Quality Control Board engineers Monday to report they have found traces of three suspected carcinogens and one chemical described as "a toxic" about 32 feet from a septic tank on their property off Kings Village Road.

"We're cleaning up everything we find and our tests show that no material in the soil has gotten off the property," plant manager Ron Lessack says.

"The new find has found contamination down to 11 feet in the location where we drilled and the groundwater level here is at 37 feet. The contamination is hundreds

of feet from our well and the city water is a long way," he says.

Both the company and city water supplies have been tested and show no contamination, he says.

In April, an anonymous tip to the county's Environmental Health Department led to the discovery that a company septic tank had traces of Trichloroethylene, or TCE, in it. The tipster said that someone in the company was pouring toxic wastes into the septic tank drainage system.

It was found the tank had 100 parts per billion (ppb) of TCE, a suspected carcinogen. Health authorities allow no amounts of this chemical in areas of human contact or on material for consumption.

TCE is also one of the contaminants the

company turned up about 32 feet from a second septic tank in its most recent testing. The find came after officials of the Regional Water Quality Control Board told the company that its entire plant area had to be checked.

The company drilled a 50-foot hole to check for contaminants at the end of septic tank leachfield. It found 180 ppb of TCE, along with 1,300 ppb of perchloroethylene (PCE), 300 ppb of trichloroethane and 20,000 ppb of freon.

Freon is the chemical that helps make refrigerators cold and is a toxic chemical.

PCE is a suspected cancer-causer and the state Department of Health will only

Please see back of section

## Toxic waste discovery—

Continued from Page A1

allow five ppb. TCA allowances are set by the EPA and that limit is 100 ppb.

All four chemicals are used as cleaning solvents. The company manufactures

furnaces used in semiconductor processing.

Lessack says the company believes the contaminants came from a freight processing facility in a nearby building. However, neither the company nor the Regional Water Quality Control Board are certain if the material was poured into drains that flowed to the septic tank.

While the four materials were found about 12 feet from the end of the tank's leachfield, there was none of the material found in the tank.

In the April find, all of the TCE was in the tank and has been cleaned up.

Lessack says he's certain none of the material has gotten off company property through the soil or into the groundwater. Also, the company is running checks all over its property and cleaning up whatever toxic waste is found.

Senior Engineer Bob Baldrige of regional water quality control says the state's main interest is getting the toxic waste cleaned up and stopping it from happening again.

"We aren't primarily interested in how it happened at this time, we just want it stopped and cleaned up," Baldrige says.

Lessack says the company guaranteed today that no toxic wastes are being disposed of improperly and that every bit that was dumped will be cleaned up.