

County putting new anti-toxics program in order

By Steve Taylor
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An unusual local government effort is under way in San Mateo County to prevent the illegal disposal of hazardous waste, clean up contaminated sites, investigate potential problems and prosecute

those who illegally dump dangerous materials.

"We're starting to roll. We're really going out there," Environmental Health Director Mark Kostielney said Tuesday. Kostielney, who is in charge of the effort, said training and preparation of people who will carry out the program is

near completion.

The goal is to educate businesses on how to dispose of hazardous wastes and ensure wastes are disposed of properly, he said.

Targets of the program are 1,300 county businesses that do such things as process photographs, dry-clean clothes, sell gasoline and

make computer chips. They produce about 223,000 tons of hazardous waste annually, and many do not handle it properly, Kostielney said.

He predicted that contaminated buildings and land — and possibly the water table beneath the properties — will be found at 10 percent

of the businesses. Problems will range from minor ones, such as motor-oil spills, to major ones, such as leaking underground storage tanks, Kostielney said.

He also expects to help District Attorney Jim Fox prosecute those

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who illegally dump their hazardous waste on vacant lots or dispose of it improperly elsewhere.

Kostielney said East Palo Alto has proven to be a major dumping ground for materials that are supposed to go to toxic-waste disposal sites in Martinez, Benicia and points farther away.

San Mateo County is one of only two California counties that signed agreements with the state to assume total responsibility for local businesses that produce hazardous waste. The other county is Contra Costa.

County officials took on the

duties to ensure that proper regulation occurs. Other areas, including Santa Clara County, are dependent on state Health Services Department inspectors, and San Mateo County was afraid it might not receive enough attention, Kostielney said.

A so-called Hazardous Materials Unit was formed in Kostielney's office to handle these affairs. The five-member force will cost the county \$302,000 during 1984-85.

Kostielney's office will assume responsibility in 17 of the county's 20 cities and in unincorporated areas for underground storage tanks. Such tanks have leaked chemicals, gasoline and other materials and polluted well-water supplies in Santa Clara County and other areas.

In Redwood City, San Carlos and Belmont, city and fire officials have assumed this duty, Kostielney said.

The state will turn over to county control 11 contaminated sites that already have been discovered. They include the Zoecon Chemical Corp. site at 1990 Bay Road and the Call-Mac Transportation Co. property at 1175 Weeks St., both in East Palo Alto.

Two other south county sites are among 11 listed in a report Kostielney gave to the county Board of Supervisors in August. They are the Varian Associates-Eimac land at 301 Industrial Way in San Carlos and the Willard Products site at 70 Chemical Way in Redwood City.

The Zoecon land, which is conta-

minated with high concentrations of arsenic, lead, mercury and other materials, now is being cleaned up. The Call-Mac site, where various hazardous materials were abandoned until 1981, has been cleaned up, but the land apparently has been contaminated because it is adjacent to Zoecon, according to Kostielney's report.

In 1982, Varian abandoned an evaporation pond and solvent disposal well, where soils show high concentrations of copper and nickel. At the Willard site, where chemicals are manufactured and mixed, contaminated ground has been found, the report states.

In both cases, clean-up efforts still are being negotiated, according to the report.