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## Sparton Clean-Up To Be Examined

By Michael Hartranft

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Steps a West-Side electronic components manufacturer is taking to clean up groundwater contamination first detected in 1983 will be the focus of two informational meetings Tuesday in Rio Rancho.

Called by federal and state environmental agencies, the identical agenda sessions will be held at City Hall in the south conference room. One will be held from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., the other from 7 to 9 p.m.

The company, Sparton Technology Inc., is under a corrective action order with the federal Environmental Protection Agency signed in October 1988, which requires it to investigate how extensive the contamination is and what will be required to clean it up, according to Dr. A. Elizabeth Gordon of the Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau, New Mexico Environment Department.

The contamination, which occurred at the Sparton complex on North Coors Road, involved solvents used in the production of electronic components, she said. The clean-up program requires state approval in the form of a "post closure care" permit, which also will be discussed Tuesday, Gordon said.

"This permit, with the broad outline of what they will have to do, will be dovetailed with the corrective action order from EPA," she said.

Gordon said the meetings will be informational, not public hearings.

"The two agencies, the state Environment Department and the EPA regional office," she said, "are going to be giving information about what both agencies are doing about the cleanup and what we're requiring of Sparton."

Gordon said Sparton has been working with the two agencies since the initial concentrations of contaminants were discovered in 1983.

The main contaminants, organic solvents known as trichloroethylene and 1,1,1-trichloroethane,

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

apparently seeped into the groundwater, primarily from a concrete sump in which waste solvents were collected and allowed to evaporate, Gordon said. Use of the sump had been discontinued in 1980. Gordon said she did not readily know how long the sump had been used.

She said there was a continuous investigation by Sparton into the seepage between 1983 and 1987. In 1987, she said, it became apparent the contamination had gone off site.

Sparton, she said, has put in recovery wells to try to stop the spread of contamination.

Gordon said the solvent waste material is now stored in drums and trucked to permitted sites.

A state Environment Department

news release said EPA officials will discuss ongoing clean-up work. A Sparton spokesman at its headquarters in Jackson, Mich., said Jan Appel, general counsel for the corporation also will be at the meeting.

The spokesman deferred the Journal's questions to Appel, who wasn't available Friday.

The solvents in question are known to be toxic, Gordon said, but the closest municipal well for drinking water is four miles to the south and unaffected by the contamination.

Jim Williams, president of New Mexico Utilities Inc., which services a large area of the northwest mesa west of the river between Sandoval County and Paradise Hills, said his company's closest well is about three miles away.