

West Side Polluter Hit With Lawsuits

BY GUILLERMO CONTRERAS
Journal Staff Writer

Federal, state and local officials are going to court to try and force an electronics manufacturer to clean up groundwater contamination that originated at its now-inactive plant on the West Side.

At a Wednesday news conference, state and local officials announced federal lawsuits have been filed by the state, city and Bernalillo County to force the parent company of Sparton Technology to clean up the contamination in the vicinity of former plant at 9621 Coors NW.

Later Wednesday, the Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney's Office in Albuquerque filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency.

"This company is recalcitrant," said Attorney General Tom Udall at the news conference. "They have not cooperated with us and they have done everything they can to avoid responsibility for polluting the groundwater here."

Officials with the Michigan-based

Sparton Corp. responded through prepared statements, saying Sparton wants to contain the contamination and has not "dragged its feet."

The Sparton officials said the company already has spent more than \$6 million on analysis and remediation efforts.

"We will spend more to implement a solution, but that solution must be workable and affordable," one of the statements said.

Sparton operated the electronics-manufacturing factory from 1961 to 1994. The company stored and disposed of metal-plating wastes in concrete basins and pits on the site, a joint news release from the city and the Attorney General's Office said.

The contamination is blamed on chemical wastes that leaked from the pits and seeped into the groundwater.

Initial talks about cleaning up the site began in the 1980s. The state Environment Department spearheaded a more urgent effort to address the problem in 1994.

City Eager To Buy Utility on West Side

BY PAT BUTLER
Journal Staff Writer

The city of Albuquerque has set its sights on buying a West Side utility that recently applied for an additional 50,500 acre-feet of water.

Bob Gurule, director of the city's Public Works Department, said the city has notified New Mexico Utilities Inc. that it wants to buy the company. The company provides water and sewer service to 5,000 customers, including Cottonwood Mall and Paradise Hills residents.

Gurule said acquiring the company would enhance the city's ability

its territory on the West Side.

"We feel the only responsible thing we can do is begin now to prepare for our projected needs," Swartwout said. "We're trying to accept responsibility."

But Gurule said city officials are determined to acquire the company and will take their case to court if necessary.

Gurule estimated it will cost \$10 million to \$20 million to buy the utility. He said it would be paid for from the city's enterprise fund, but Albuquerque water customers wouldn't see their rates increase.

Assistant City Attorney Nann

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