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Sparton to Begin Cleanup Process

A company responsible for causing soil and ground water contamination on Albuquerque's west side is going to take the first steps needed for the cleanup, due in large part to efforts of the New Mexico Environment Department, the City of Albuquerque, the US Department of Justice and US Environmental Protection Agency. The New Mexico Attorney General's Office and the Office of Natural Resource Trustee were also involved.

All of these agencies filed a lawsuit on February 19, 1997 against Sparton Technology Inc., a subsidiary of Sparton Corp., which manufactured printed circuit boards at 9621 Coors Rd. NW between 1961 and 1994.

Today, US District Judge LeRoy Hansen signed an order which requires Sparton to define the true extent of the plume and conduct a pump test that will be used to design the containment system. The terms of the order were agreed to by all parties to the lawsuit.

"We are pleased. Sparton has been dragging its feet but now is being required to start the cleanup that we've been trying to have it implement for years," Environment Secretary Mark Weidler said. **"The message is clear. Spending money to delay cleanup won't get you off the hook. Everyone involved could have saved a lot of money, and the cleanup would have been easier, if the company would have met their responsibilities and started seriously cleaning up their mess years ago."**

Ground Water contamination was first discovered in 1983, and an initial treatment system began operating in 1988. In 1994, the NMED informed EPA and Sparton of the increased concentration of TCE, a cleaning solvent, in off-site monitor wells and the inadequacy of corrective actions.

In order to facilitate Sparton's cleanup, the NMED expedited the approval of a Ground Water Discharge Plan, which will allow Sparton to construct an infiltration gallery where treated water will be returned to the aquifer. It could be a decade or more before the site and thøffsite plume has been cleaned up.

This is the NMED's third major cleanup in the Albuquerque area in the last three years. The GTE/Siemens facility at Eubank and I-40 recently completed its remediation of TCE-contaminated soil and the Digital plant at I-25 and Jefferson is cleaning soil and ground water through the use of a soil vapor extraction unit and a ground water treatment system.

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