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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "CALIFORNIA WONT ALLOW BURIAL OF TOXIC DIOXIN" NCBC
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California won't allow burial of toxic dioxin

SPECIAL TO THE SUN

WEST COVINA, Calif. — The California Health Department Thursday turned down an application to bury filter cartridges containing a toxic chemical removed from Herbicide Orange stored at a Seabee installation in Gulfport Miss.

State health director Dr. Richard Lackner said the state agency has denied an application of Agent Chemical, Inc. of Houston, Tex., to bury TCDD, also known as dioxin, at the Ben K. Kazarian Co. landfill here.

The application was part of Agent Chemical's proposal to reprocess the banned Herbicide Orange stored at the Seabee Center in Gulfport and on Johnson Island in the Pacific. The firm's charcoal filtration system isolated dioxin during pilot processing in Gulfport in June, lowering the dioxin level in the resulting herbicide to an acceptable environmental level.

Twelve cartridges have been produced in pilot testing and stored at BKK offices in Wilmington, Calif., awaiting action on the burial permit's application. Agent Chemical had applied to bury the 12 cartridges and those which would be produced in full scale reprocessing.

The health department's ruling reportedly came at the same time that officials of West Covina, a Los Angeles suburb, and BKK representatives had mutually agreed to eliminate the area as potential burial site.

City and company officials met Wednesday afternoon at which time the agreement apparently was made.

While the California Health Department must approve chemicals put into the BKK dump, sources here said West Covina city officials may disapprove burial proposals.

BKK had been contracted by

Agent Chemical to bury the cartridges.

Recent publicity of the proposal to bury dioxin at a landfill here apparently was a factor in the decision to forbid the burial. West Covina city hall reportedly was besieged with telephone calls following newspaper and television stories.

The effect of the health department's decision on Agent Chemical's proposal was not immediately clear. A company officer declined comment and the company's attorney was unavailable for comment.

It was also not immediately known what would happen to the 12 containers of dioxin being stored at Wilmington. There was speculation that they may be shipped to Kelly Air Force Base in Texas where three of them had been stored for several months.

Representatives of nine federal agencies involved in Agent Chemical's reprocessing proposal are scheduled to meet next week in Washington. California's refusal to permit burial of dioxin is almost certain to be discussed then.

More than 800,000 gallons of Herbicide Orange are stored at the Seabee Center while another 1.5 million gallons are on Johnston Island. The defoliant was used in the Vietnam War but banned in 1970 amid reports that dioxin was linked to birth defects.

A chemical explosion last month in Italy involving dioxin resulted in the evacuation of nearly 1,000 persons, the deaths of hundreds of small animals and several therapeutic abortions.

The dioxin level of the Herbicide Orange in Gulfport ranges from about .2 parts per million to five parts per million. The amount considered acceptable by the Environmental Protection Agency is .1 parts per million.

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