56 OC firms among top 3,000 ozone depleters, group says

By Marla Cone
The Register

O.C. Register -1-17-96

More than 3,000 companies, including 56 in Orange County, still use large amounts of dangerous solvents that are destroying the Earth's protective ozone layer and few have taken "concrete steps to phase them out," an environmental group reported Tuesday.

"Their delays threaten the health and safety of all Americans," said David Doniger, director of an ozone-protection project conducted by the Natural Resources Defense Council, a national group based in Washington, DC.

"Decisions made in the board rooms of these companies will determine whether we succeed or fail in preventing the first truly global environmental catastrophe."

Nationally, more than 200 million pounds of three chemicals were emitted into the atmosphere by 3,014 companies in 1987, according to the group's report, entitled the "Who's Who of American Ozone Depleters."

In Orange County, the major source of the chemicals was Bentley Laboratories Inc. in Irvine, owned by Baxter Healthcare Corp.

The company, which manufactures medical devices, ranked 19th in the nation, with reported emissions of 350,436 pounds of methyl chloroform and 356,535 pounds of CFC-113 in 1987, according to the group's report.

"We're attacking the problem," said John Campion, a vice president at the company. "We have knocked down our emissions significantly in the past two years and we're not stopping there."

OC's ozone-depleting sources

Fifty-six Orange County companies are on a list of top sources of ozone-depleting chemicals compiled by the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group. Bentley Laboratories, in Irvine, is ranked 19th in the nation, with more than 700,000 pounds of methyl chloroform and CFC-113 emitted into the atmosphere in 1987. The data was provided by the companies in reports filed with the federal government. The top CFC polluters in Orange County ranked by pounds of emissions are:

	methyl chloroform	CFC113
Bentley Laboratories Irvine	350,436	356,535
McDonnell Douglas Huntington Beach	313,000	20,200
Xidex Data Disc Irvine (Plant shut down in 1988)		255,000
Rockwell International Anaheim (Reduced emissions to 70,000 in 1988)		210,000 ws
Anaheim Manufacturing Anaheim	171,065	
Ford Aerospace Corp. Newport Beach	88,356	35,000
Scientific Spray Finishes Fullerton	106,178	
Kirkhill Rubber Co. Brea	105,319	
Cimco Costa Mesa		102,000
Hughes Aircraft Fullerton	46,900	20,900
Hughes Aircraft Newport Beach	15,469	27,752

Source: **Natural Resources Defense Council, "Who's Who of American Ozone Depleters"**

Other major sources of the ozone-killing chemicals in Orange County were McDonnell Douglas Astronautics in Huntington Beach, Rockwell International Corp. in Anaheim, Hughes Aircraft Co. in Fullerton and Newport Beach, Ford Aerospace Corp. in Newport Beach and Anaheim Manufacturing.

For its report, the environmental group analyzed 1987 chemical inventories that the companies filed with the federal government. The list includes only major sources — those that emitted at least 2,000 pounds.

The three chemicals examined in the report are methyl chloroform and CFC-113 (known as Freon), both widely used as metal-cleaning solvents, and carbon tetrachloride, used primarily to manufacture chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs. Those compounds are responsible for more than one-third of the depletion of the ozone layer, the group said.

Environmentalists say scientists have linked the chemicals with the hole in Earth's ozone for more than 10 years, but industry has been slow to react.

Throughout Southern California, industries are hunting for safe, non-polluting substitutes for the chemicals, which are widely used by the aerospace and electronics industries for cleaning circuit boards and metal parts.

"We're looking to our vendors, the manufacturers of these chemicals," said Sheila Carter, spokeswoman for McDonnell Douglas in Huntington Beach, which uses the chemicals to clean parts produced for the Defense Department.

"They are coming up with substitutes, but we will have to test them to make sure they meet our requirements and the requirements of the government, our customer."

McDonnell Douglas was the second largest source in the county — 313,000 pounds of methyl chloroform and 20,200 pounds of CFC-113 in 1987, the report said.

Hughes Aircraft Co. mounted a major research effort in December to find alternatives for CFCs. The research, conducted at Hughes' El Segundo plant, is a joint venture with the region's air-quality agency and the findings will be shared with all companies.

About 200 major companies, anticipating regulations that will force cutbacks, have eliminated the chemicals, cut usage or set deadlines for phase-out, according to the list.

For example, Pratt & Whitney, an aircraft-engine manufacturer in Connecticut, reported release of 1.9 million pounds of methyl chloroform, more than any other plant, in 1987. In 1988, it reported the release of 420,000 pounds.

Rockwell International Corp. in Anaheim also reported a cut in ozone-damaging emissions, from 210,000 pounds in 1987 to 70,000 pounds in 1988.

"It was a fairly major decrease — two thirds," said Tony Longo, a spokesman for Rockwell. "We're just more careful in how we use it and use less of it. Also, we're more accurate in estimating now."

Bentley Laboratories uses the chemicals to manufacture oxygenators, devices that perform the function of lungs during open-heart surgery.

By changing its manufacturing processes, ventilation system and other equipment, the company cut its emissions from more than 700,000 pounds in 1987 to less than 300,000 in 1989, Campion said.

Even with the cutbacks, the company remains the top source in Orange County. Campion said the company plans to cut its emissions in half again this year.

In the Montreal Protocol, an international agreement signed in 1987, the United States and other major industrial nations agreed to force a 50 percent reduction of CFCs by 1998.

Unwilling to wait, the city of Irvine last year adopted the nation's most sweeping local law to help protect the ozone layer.

The ordinance bans most uses of CFCs in the city beginning in July. Bentley Laboratories and other Irvine companies are expected to seek extensions from the city.

Government and industry have acknowleged that CFCs, including CFC-113 and carbon tetrachloride should be phased out. But methyl chloroform, whose potency for ozone destruction is less than 15 percent of CFCs, remains unregulated by the Montreal Protocol.