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## Report: Emerson pollution includes very toxic substances

**ROGER DUPUIS II**  
Journal Staff

ITHACA -- A consultant's report obtained Monday outlines how trichloroethylene and other toxic substances were detected at various levels in testing near Emerson Power Transmission last month.

Virginia-based Environmental Strategies Consulting performed the soil gas testing on behalf of Emerson, and submitted the report to the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

In addition to trichloroethylene (TCE), the study also detected evidence of related chemicals cis-1,2-dichloroethene, tetrachloroethene and 1,1,1-trichloroethane in tests done at nine sites on June 17.

TCE levels reached 80 parts per billion in one location, or 80 times state Department of Health outdoor air level guidelines.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, breathing small amounts of TCE may cause headaches, lung irritation, dizziness, poor coordination and difficulty concentrating. Breathing large amounts may cause impaired heart function, unconsciousness and death. Breathing it for long periods may cause nerve, kidney and liver damage.

Volatile organic compounds were found in the soil gas at sampling sites on South Hill Terrace, South Cayuga Street and South Geneva Street. The highest concentrations were found on South Cayuga Street.

Walter Hang, president of Ithaca-based Toxics Targeting, said the tests substantiate concerns first raised by state health officials as early as 1990.

"It simply verified that the solvent contamination continues to spread off the factory site, it appears, into the residential neighborhood," Hang said.

TCE was used by the factory's former owner until 1983. Contamination at Emerson was first reported to the state in 1987, and clean-up measures implemented between 1991 and 1994.

In 1990, the state Health Department recommended that neighboring homes

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be tested for inside air contamination, something Hang said did not happen. He said the new data not only shows the need for indoor air testing, but suggests that the treatment system apparently is not working.

DEC officials are awaiting a work plan from Emerson that will include indoor air testing in neighboring homes. That plan is due Friday, and public presentations about the contamination and testing have been set for Aug. 4.

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