

HYNIX ACID PERMIT GETS NOD

The Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) approved Hynix's permit to increase its release of hydrogen fluoride. HF is a byproduct of the hydrofluoric acid that is used to etch silicon wafers at Hynix's west Eugene chip plant.

The decision, which was released Sept. 6, came after more than a year of debate and a review process that included almost 300 public comments. Hynix has been trying since July 2006 to get permission to raise its HF emissions.

Hynix will be allowed to release the 5 tons of HF it requested. This is up from the 1.8 tons for which Hynix previously had approval. Hynix is already releasing more than the approved 1.8 tons: The plant released 2.06 tons of HF into the air in 2006 and paid an \$800 fine for going over the emission limit. This new permit will last until December 2011.

HF is listed by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a possible agent for use in chemical terrorism. Acute exposure to HF can cause death from cardiac or respiratory failure, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Chronic inhalation has resulted in "irritation and congestion of the nose, throat, and bronchi at low levels."

According to LRAPA Hynix's emissions release of HF is still "well below" the threshold that would classify it as "a major industrial source."

The Hynix plant is located near the Ridgeline Trail, West Eugene Wetlands and the Nature Conservancy's Willow Creek Preserve. The area is the primary home of Fender's blue butterfly, an endangered species that uses Kincaid's lupine as its food source. In his comments on Hynix's proposal, UO chemistry professor Paul Engelking cited concerns over HF's effects on plant life.

The new permit requires more frequent monitoring than the last permit. The company will test the exhaust stack emissions twice a year, rather than once every five years.

"Numerous changes" were made to the permit in terms of "monitoring, reporting and operating parameters," according to Merlyn Hough, LRAPA director. The permit was "much better" as a result of the public involvement, he said in LRAPA's press release.

The final permit and public responses to it will be posted on LRAPA's website (www.lrapa.org) no later than Sept. 14. — *Camilla Mortensen*



SEEDY SCIENCE

OSU researchers are beginning a \$94,000 study to determine if field burning smoke harms those who inhale it.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) instigated the study using fees assessed to farmers who still burn their fields, according to a recent *R-G* (9-7) story.

Last month, in response to a request by Lane County's Board of Commissioners to enact an emergency ban on field burning, the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) ruled it lacked enough information on health hazards of field burning smoke to stop the burn. They voted to ask the Oregon Legislature for \$90,000 to fund a study on the issue.

The \$94,000 OSU study is not the study requested by the EQC. It is a separate study.

The researchers, Dave Stone and Jeffrey Jenkins, are faculty in the OSU Department of Environmental & Molecular Toxicology. It isn't uncommon for private industries to provide research funding for studies in higher education. Most academics then publish their findings in peer-reviewed journal to help prevent bias and ensure high research standards.

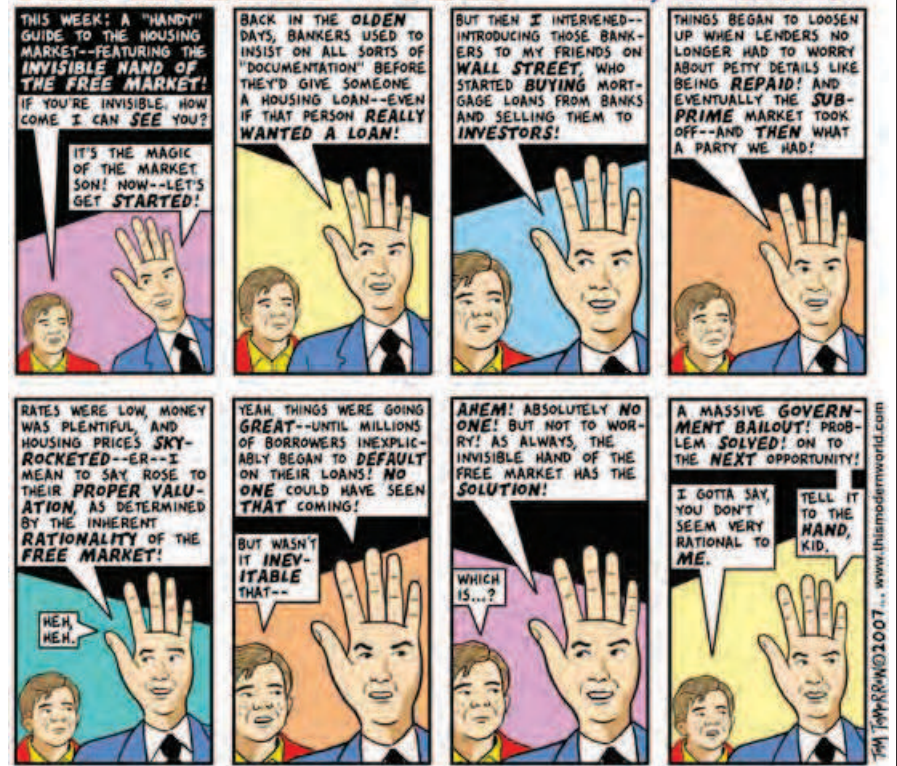
This study, because of pressing the time frame of the field burning issue, may come out in a different form, but Todd Simmons, Director of News & Communication Services for OSU, said the research will be reviewed, and he stressed the school's reputation as a top research university. "We've done nothing historically or currently to show bias on the issue of field burning," he said.

A copy of the OSU study proposal was sent by the ODA to grass seed growers on an alternatives-to-field-burning research committee for approval. Copies were not sent to organizations that are against field burning, such as the Oregon Medical Association. Simmons said he will try to provide the *EW* with a copy of the proposal.

The study will use already existing data to assess health risks. Charlie Tebbutt of the Western Environmental Law Center questioned the need for more studies when there are "already 2000 peer reviewed studies." — *Camilla Mortensen*

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

LAWMAKERS JOIN OFFICES

Five state lawmakers representing the greater Eugene-Springfield area are now located in a central office building in Springfield. The five celebrated the opening of their shared district office Sept. 6 with a public gathering and open house.

The offices are located in the Allied Building at 1126 Gateway Loop, Suite 128, north of the Gateway Mall.

The purpose of the joint offices is to improve accessibility to constituents and make the most of state resources, says Rep. Phil Barnhart. He is sharing the offices and staffing with Sen. Vicki Walker and Reps. Nancy Nathanson, Terry Beyer and Chris



Sen. Vicki Walker with Becky Flynn and Maceo Persson of Basic Rights Oregon at the new district offices

Edwards.

"Many of the benefits that come from this office space are intangible and difficult to measure, but are major benefits nonetheless," says Barnhart. Some of those are "being able to host quiet, private meetings rather than meeting in a coffee shop and having a consistent physical presence for our constituents."

Barnhart says state lawmakers traditionally work out of their "basements, dens, spare bedrooms," and by having all their staff in one office, they are able to streamline duties and avoid duplication.

A crowd of local community, business and nonprofit leaders turned out for the open house. Office hours are 9 am to 5 pm, but calling ahead is recommended at 607-9207. The fax number is 726-9810.

RICH GROCERS STIFF UNION

Albertsons, Fred Meyer and Safeway have left their union workers hanging without a contract for the last six months, and the workers are growing restless, according to the union.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 555 held a protest on Aug. 27 on the Ferry Street Bridge to inform the community about the negotiations. The union reported "significant movement" in mediated negotiations Aug. 28 and has scheduled two more negotiation sessions in September and another three in October to talk about healthcare.

The Fred Meyer (Kroger) corporation reported "astronomical" profits of \$3.3 billion last year; Albertsons (Supervalu) reported \$2.2 billion and Safeway \$2.2 billion, according to the union website. With continuing double digit profits, local union head Jeff McDonald asked, "What excuses will they use this time? You work hard to make billions for these corporations, you deserve increases and improvements. Together along with all our union brothers and sisters around the nation and with our family and friends, we will demand that you too are rewarded."

—*Alan Pittman*