

Fear of toxic chemicals is rising

# Institute studies poison problems

**United Press International**  
NEW YORK — One of the mushrooming problems of American industry today is the chemical toxicity of many materials and products.

A case in point is the current dispute between the steel mills and the plastics companies over the alleged poisoning potential of plastic pipes and electric conduits, particularly over fumes released if the plastic pipe burns.

Although it is not directly concerned with the plastic pipe dispute, the Chemical Industry

Institute of Toxicity in Raleigh, N.C., active since 1976, is engaged in wide-based research paid for by some two-score major chemical companies to determine which chemicals are most likely to involve industrial companies in serious pollution and public health problems.

"CIIT is not an adversary institution," said its president, Dr. Robert A. Neal. "We don't take cases to defend companies against specific allegations that the chemical substances they use are harmful to workers or their products are harmful to con-

sumers."  
That is left up to the manufacturers themselves, he said.

CIIT engages in basic, independent research on the toxicity of chemical and other physical substances.

Since, in interpreting the federal Toxic Substance Control Act of 1976, the Environmental Protection Agency listed 43,000 such substances, the priority problem is enormous. These 43,000 substances don't include finished combination products in food, cosmetics, drugs and pesticides. The institute does

not test proprietary compounds.

Despite the huge number of substances listed as potentially poisonous, Neal said no one knows for sure how many chemical substances really are high risk for workers or consumers.

In its work up to now, Neal said, CIIT has given higher priority to hazards to workers than hazards to consumers. That's probably because workers are better organized than consumers and their claims for protection and compensation present a more direct threat to manufacturers.

"The goal," Neal said, "is to present industry and the scientific world with impartial evidence about the potential toxicity of materials so manufacturers won't rush into new products unaware of potential poisoning and pollution problems."

Because of the comparative paucity of current knowledge of toxicology, Neal said, industry faces a severe regulatory bottleneck in the development of new and useful chemicals and consumer products, and even in the use of chemicals now available.

# New UT telescope may help NASA with space exploration

**United Press International**  
DAVIS MOUNTAINS — Beyond earth's obscure corner a star-packed spiral arm of the Milky Way, the universe and its secrets stretch out in all directions — perhaps even beyond imagination.

But if the universe has an edge, as many scientists believe, the first glimpse of it may come from two new scientific tools — NASA's orbiting space telescope and, if approved by University of Texas officials, a land-based telescope on a desolate mountaintop in west Texas.

About \$1 million in private donations has already been collected to expand UT's McDonald Observatory, located on Mount Locke in the Davis Mountains, by adding a 300-inch telescopic mirror on nearby Mount Livermore.

The McDonald telescope would be the world's largest and have the capability of seeing events that took place soon after the cosmos' Big Bang birth some 15 billion years ago.

"Astronomy has enriched our lives and given us a proper sense of perspective," said Dr. Fritz Benedict, a research scientist at UT's astronomy department. "Humans have always been anxious about what's out there."

The UT Board of Regents will decide within the next few months whether to approve the

project, which will eventually cost \$45 million, Benedict said. The telescope could be functional by 1988, making it a valuable research tool to be used in conjunction with the space telescope, due for launch in 1985.

The space telescope, while much smaller than land-based

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telescopes, will be able to peer seven times farther into the universe — from 2 billion light years to about 14 billion light years. (A light year is the distance that light, traveling at about 186,000 miles per second, travels in one year.)

The space telescope will have the advantage of working outside the earth's atmosphere, which interferes with the ability of land-based telescopes to see faint, distant objects clearly, even in optimum viewing conditions.

"It will allow us to see that

fuzzy blob with clarity," Benedict said.

But, "the space telescope will not solve all our problems," he said. "More likely, it will raise more questions that it will answer. There will be a growing role for McDonald's (after the space telescope is in place). Any telescope we build on the ground will not be wasted."

With its huge mirror, the McDonald telescope will be able to collect more light over longer periods of time. And it is the information contained in photons of light that gives away the secrets of distant stars.

By collecting what Benedict calls "buckets of light," scientists can better deduce a star's temperature, distance and velocity. The telescopes will search for quasars — highly energetic objects that might have been formed during the Big Bang and which travel near the speed of light.

By studying stars that seem to be orbiting an invisible twin, the telescopes may find further evidence of black holes — areas of densely-packed space that seem to be nothing but pure gravity.

Scientists already have discovered a prime candidate near a star called Cygnus X-1, which appears to orbit a non-existent neighbor.

Benedict said he hopes the telescopes will also find new configurations of galaxies or catch

the evolutionary process of a new star.

"The scopes will raise the curtain on the golden age of galaxies," he said. "The biggest hope with the 300-inch, is to set it on a piece of the sky for perhaps a month. We may see a new galaxy in formation or a super nova (exploding star) event."

Benedict explained that the most distant objects in space are the oldest ones. Therefore, to look at light from such objects is to look back in time.

"We will come full circle," he said. "Physicists are moving toward a basic understanding of matter. As our telescopes push back in time, we may eventually find what happened during the first few seconds of the universe."

Finally, the telescopes may be able to provide scientists with indirect evidence of extraterrestrial life by determining the frequency of planets in the universe.

"Are planets a rarity? If so, we are a rarity," Benedict said. "It will be very important to see planets orbiting around other stars."



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**United Press International**  
Being late for dates or appointments is the most common signal that a man wants to break off a relationship, says a sex therapist and magazine columnist.

Writing in the March issue of Glamour, Dr. Avodah K. Offit says other signals are changes in the expected schedule of meetings, subtle shifts in topics of conversation and a different attitude toward lovemaking.

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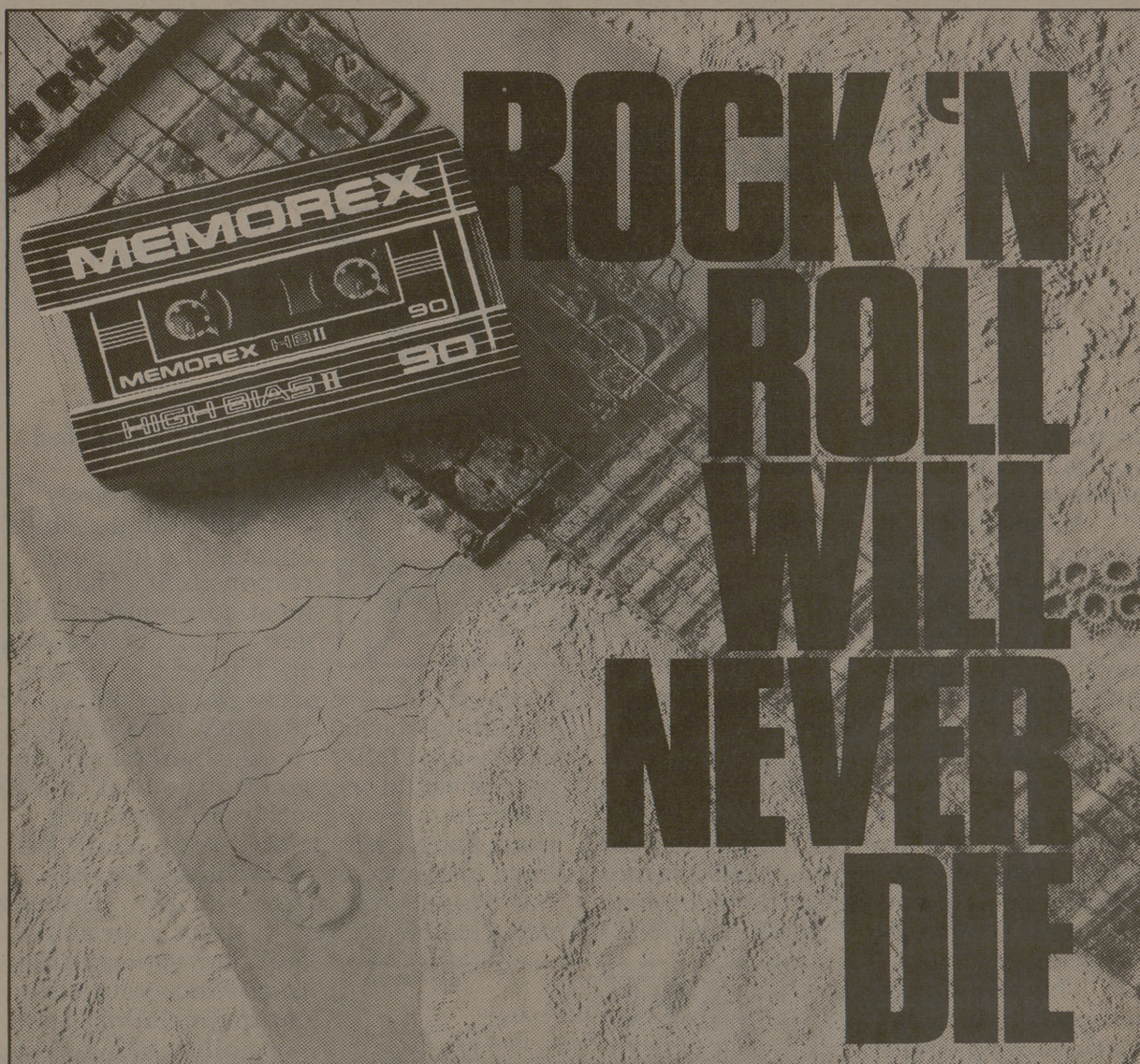
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