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## **Clothier to end use of solvent**

HAYWARD -- Tuxedo rental company Selix Formalwear will have to begin phasing out use of a controversial dry-cleaning solvent next year.

The company settled a civil lawsuit Friday that means the corporation must halt all emissions of perchloroethylene, known as perc, from its Foothill Boulevard facility by 2008.

The settlement stems from a March 2004 lawsuit filed by the Oakland-based Center for Environmental Health that raised concerns about Selix workers being exposed to potentially "cancer-causing" perc emissions.

Michael Green, CEH's executive director, said Selix has agreed to eliminate one of its two Hayward perc machines by mid-2006, and eliminate all perc emissions from the facility by the end of 2008.

Until that date, Green said the company will place statements warning that perc is "known to cause cancer" on dry cleaning bags, in mailings to neighbors, and at a noticeable location at the Hayward facility.

Al Lampkins, a Selix general manager, declined to speak about the settlement Tuesday, referring all comment to a company attorney, Vincent Hurley of Salinas. Hurley and his colleague Susan Blitch, who worked on the case, did not return calls for comment.

The tuxedo and formal wear rental company, which was founded in 1906, was taken over by Salinas-based Dick Bruhn Inc. in 1980.

Selix Formalwear's Web site states that the company stocks more than 20,000 coats.

Green called the settlement a victory for the environment and said it is part of a pattern replacing outdated perc machines with equipment that utilizes cleaner technology.

"Some companies are doing it because it's a good business move and others are being forced to do it because of organizations like CEH," Green said.

Perc is a chlorine-based chemical that tends to be persistent and toxic, according to a CEH statement.

It was designated a toxic air contaminant by the California Air Resources Board in 1993.

Green said the best alternative to perc use is "wet-cleaning," a simple method of blasting clothes with steam. He said for many companies, petroleum-based chemicals are a more practical alternative that is still cleaner than perchloroethylene.

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