

# Smelter stack slated to remain a while

## Some of surrounding buildings to be demolished next year; most to stay put

By JEFF WEATHERSBY  
The News Tribune

Even though the Asarco smelter has supposedly ceased copper production forever, the Ruston-Tacoma skyline isn't likely to change much after the company completes its first — and possibly only — round of demolition.

Smelter Manager Lawrence Lindquist told the Puget Sound Air Pollution Control Agency board yesterday that only a few buildings are scheduled to be torn down, probably next year.

The only noticeable change will be that the "cluster" of buildings around the stack will be gone. But most of the smelter buildings will remain.

The smelter manager said the "cluster" around the stack includes two brick flue ducts and two buildings containing air pollution control equipment as well as several small ancillary structures.

Lindquist said the company has no plans "at this time" to demolish the smelter's most prominent landmark, the 572-foot stack.

Lindquist said, at best, Asarco would be clearing two or three acres of the 97-acre plant.

Asarco hopes to obtain its dem-

olition permits by this fall or winter and then hire a demolition firm.

Asarco is also commissioning an environmental impact statement to determine what environmental harm the demolition may cause.

Lindquist said the company hopes to find a use for some or all of the remaining buildings. He said that several prospective tenants have looked at the property but Asarco has received no firm offers, in part because it is not clear when the property would be available.

In other developments, Lindquist was asked by PSAPCA board member Chuck Kleeberg to comment on a March 29 *News Tribune* story that quoted former Asarco board Chairman Charles Barber as saying the company knew in 1975 the Tacoma smelter was doomed so it delayed investment in new pollution control equipment.

Lindquist said he wasn't present at the interview and didn't know what Barber said.

But he added that sometimes the "one or tenor" of conversation with reporters appears differently in the newspaper.

Lindquist also said the company did not circumvent pollution regulations since 1975. Instead, Asarco spent approximately \$45 million purchasing pollution equipment to comply with variances from air pollution standards granted by the PSAPCA board.

The smelter manager also said the company lost production time by curtailing smelter operations during weather conditions in which gases and other emissions from the smelter tended to stay in the area.

In addition to complying with PSAPCA orders, the smelter also complied with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations, Lindquist said.

When it occasionally committed violations, the smelter was cited and the fines were either paid or appealed, Lindquist said.

The issue of violations was also raised at the meeting by several residents of Northeast Tacoma, who questioned why PSAPCA did not have people working at night to look for air polluters.

Some Northeast Tacoma residents have suspected for some time that airborne pollutants from the Tidel flats have been making people sick.

Jennell Boothe, who lives in the Trout Lake area, claimed PSAPCA inspectors should be out at night because that is when the majority of pollution problems occur. One former PSAPCA official has told *The News Tribune* that highly unionized PSAPCA employees would have to be paid expensive overtime to work past 4:30 p.m., so they are never scheduled to do so.

Arthur Dammkoehler, PSAPCA's air pollution officer, confirmed today that his employees are members of the Teamster's union and that the agency was never funded to take care of enforcement problems at night. He added that it is easier to find polluters in the daytime and most pollution complaints occur during the day.

Kleeberg asked Dammkoehler to schedule a board work session to discuss the night-work issue.

Tacoma Mayor Doug Sutherland, who chairs PSAPCA, noted that the agency recently placed an air-pollution monitor in Northeast Tacoma. PSAPCA says the device will monitor emissions from such possible Tidelat sources as U.S. Gypsum, Penwalt Chemical, Kaiser Aluminum and the Champion Kraft mill.