

Power plant needs approval from Town to install hydro cables

By **Melanie Hennessey**
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

While TransCanada Energy's (TCE) power plant is slated for construction in Halton Hills, the company is now looking to Milton for approval to install underground hydro transmission cables along Sixth Line.

The company went before the Town's administration and planning committee Monday night to seek its support in negotiating an agreement to make an underground electrical connection to Hydro One on the local sideroad.

TCE was awarded a 20-year contract by the Ontario Power Authority in November to build a 680-megawatt, natural gas-fired generating station on Steeles Avenue, west of Sixth Line.

The cables are needed to connect the plant to the overhead transmission lines that run parallel to the railroad tracks in Milton.

TCE bid development manager John Mikkelsen outlined the benefits to an underground connection, such as a reduction in the visual impact to local residents and the minimal construction and operational impact it will have on existing Hydro One lines.

He noted that when the cables are being put in, there would be a need to interrupt or change the traffic flow on Sixth Line, but local access would be maintained.

Ward 1 Councillor Rick Day asked if the Town has a legal requirement to grant TCE the easement for the connection.

Town CAO Mario Belvedere told him there's an obligation for the municipality to work with the company.

The focus of the meeting then turned to the plant's emissions. Ward 3 Councillor Jan Mowbray wondered if the plant would need to use 'scrubbers', which are often used to remove sulfur from the exhaust of coal-fired power plants.

Christine Cinnamon — TCE manager of health, safety and environment — said natural gas produces low or almost non-existent levels of sulfur dioxide. She noted that particulate matter is also low in exhaust from natural gas.

Day asked why the plant needs to have 200-foot-tall smoke stacks if it's going to be "so environmentally clean and friendly."

"We want to make awful damn sure of the environmental safety of this plant," he said.

Cinnamon said the higher the stacks go, the farther up they take emissions, thus avoiding a concentration of them in a certain area.

Fellow Ward 1 Councillor Brian Penman wanted to know what the emission levels would be like when the plant starts up and shuts down.

Cinnamon said there would be an increase when it fires up in the morning.

"But we can get to a low level within 15 minutes," she said.

And Ward 4 Councillor Paul Scherer asked if there's anything the Town can get TCE to do to lower its emissions, to which Cinnamon said there's no technology available to reduce it further.

Ward 2 Councillor Mike Boughton pointed out he's received e-mails from residents concerned with the potential health impacts of the plant.

"People are telling me they want to move away because of this plant," he said.

He asked the TCE representatives in attendance if they would consider buying a home in Halton Hills or Milton. Cinnamon told him "absolutely."

In the end, the committee supported a lengthy recommendation on the power plant that calls for:

- Town staff to continue monitoring TCE's environmental approval process.

- Town Engineering Services Director Paul Cripps to continue discussions with TCE regarding the installation of transmission cables on Sixth Line.


- Staff to report back to council when TCE has responded in detail to outstanding concerns from the Region and local resident Rollie Willis.

Willis submitted a letter to council that outlines information he gathered from TCE staff about the plant and raises several questions and concerns he'd like the Town to address through an independent environmental study.

The committee endorsed having Willis' letter taken into consideration during the Town's monitoring process.

The motion will go before town council Monday night.

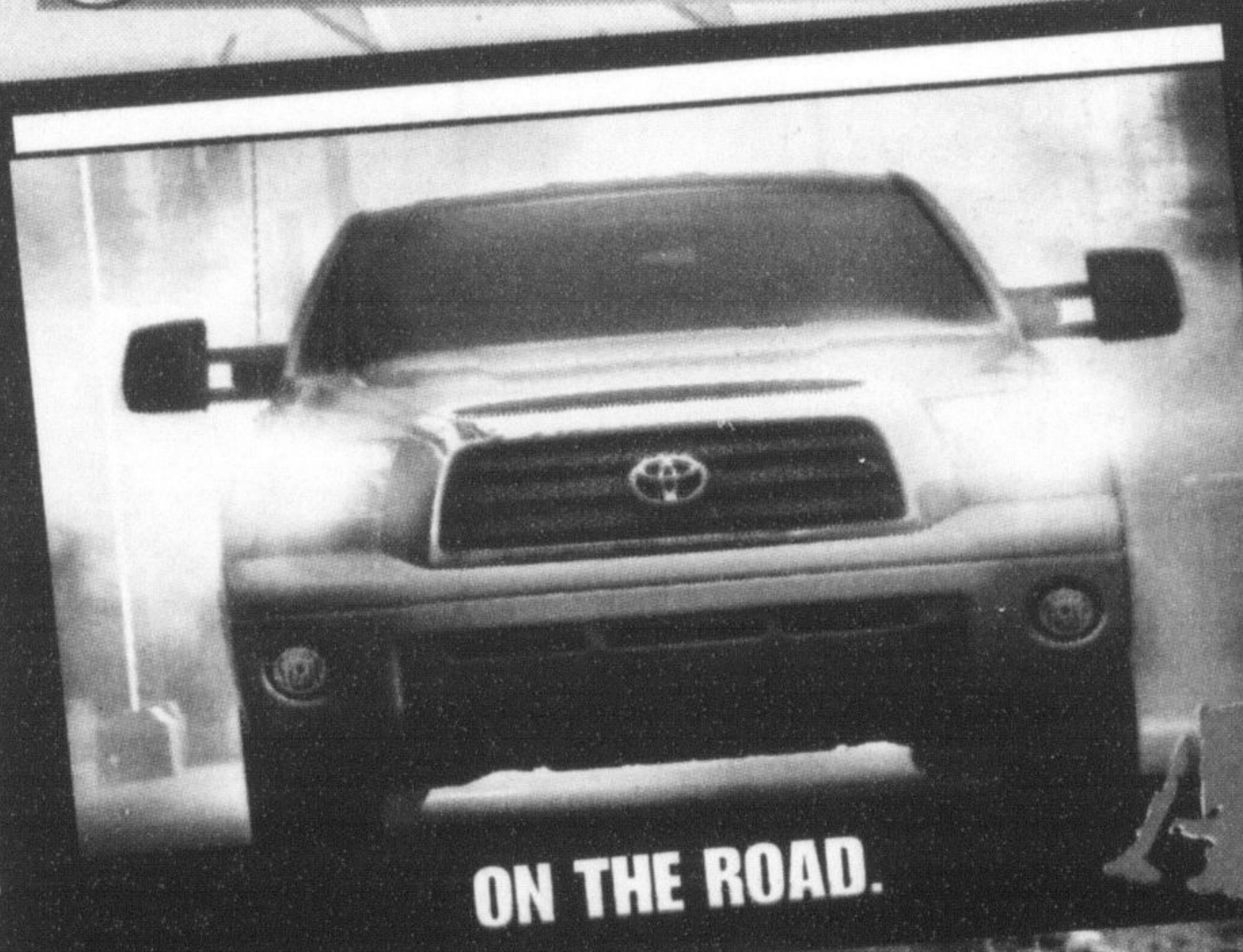
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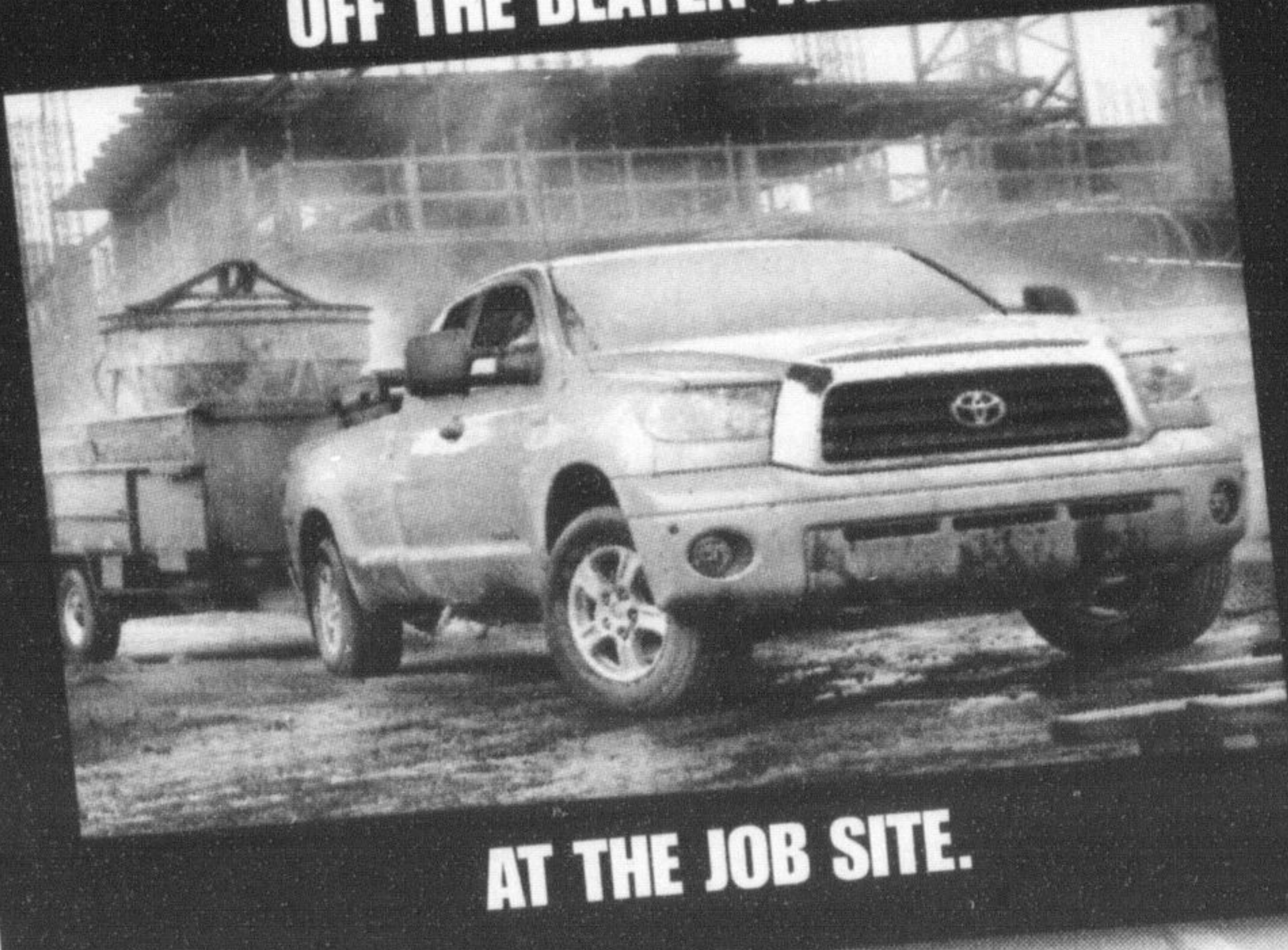
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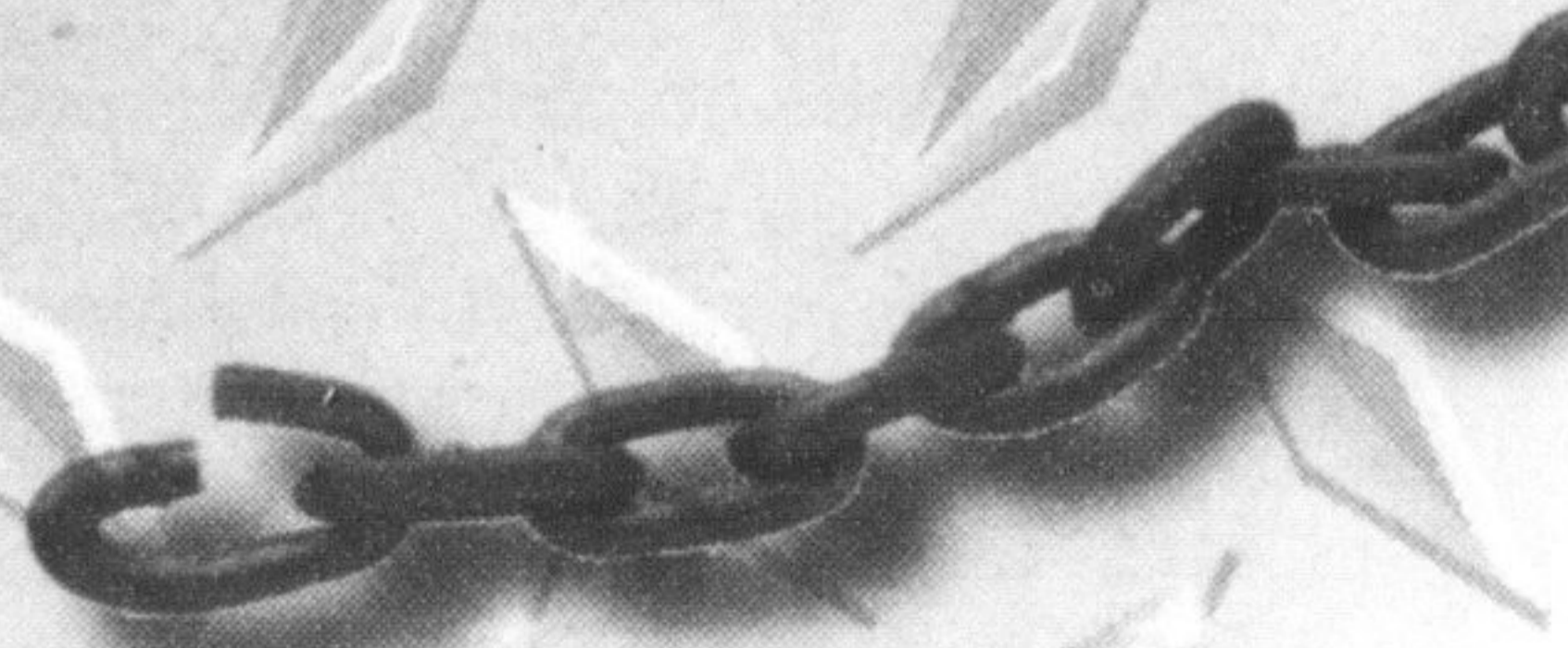
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