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# BUSINESS

## Little recourse in battle against spam

BY MITCHELL BROWN  
Staff Writer

By all accounts, "Dan" is an ordinary fellow with what's rapidly becoming an all-too-common workplace problem.

For the past three months, Dan, who works for a media company in York Region, has been inundated with spam — all those unsolicited e-mail messages nobody wants but everyone gets in their inbox.

At first, his office account was mostly receiving innocuous messages offering, say, discounts on used printer cartridges.

Then, the really nasty stuff started to arrive.

"I got one saying, 'This is the sickest, most disgusting site you'll ever see, click here,' as a come-on the other day," he said.

Wisely, he declined to take them up on the offer.

"Accessing porn from here is an offence that you can be dismissed for," he said.

"And I have a certain set of beliefs and a position that, if people think I'm a porn hound, is going to be undermined."

"I have no idea where they got my e-mail address," Dan said, stressing he does not make a habit of visiting any site containing pornography.

Still, "it's a concern that someone will spot it and think I'm into that stuff."

It may be small comfort, but Dan is not alone in his frustration.

Even those with expertise in the web business are finding it hard to keep their heads above the rising tide of titillation.

"I've had 60 spam e-mails today and I haven't checked in the past hour so I probably have a lot more waiting," said Al Redpath, a web designer and co-owner of Newmarket's Outrageous Creations!

"It's mainly because my e-mail address is published on a number of the websites we do for clients. That can generate quite a bit of spam."

Indeed, one of the most popular

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## Factories can be noxious neighbours

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

"It's not hitting me in the face like it was," Jason Hatt said to a visitor outside his Richmond Hill home.

But when the wind shifted, he found it again, the smell he thought was burning brake pads until he followed his nose to the industrial buildings on Newkirk Road.

Behind Gamma Foundries, where an open bin collects a black slag of copper, zinc and lead, Mr. Hatt found the smell was stronger.

"If you inhale without using your nasal passage, just using your mouth, you can actually taste it," he said.

Most of the foundry's metallic waste is piled together for recycling, but some of it — in 2000, an estimated 540 kilograms of zinc, 80 of lead and 10 of copper — flies up Gamma's smokestack, about two blocks from Mr. Hatt's yard and close to a town park, where he plays with his infant son.

*"They don't feel their voice means anything anymore."*

That such pollution is legal, agreed on by Gamma and the provincial government, makes Mr. Hatt angry. "Allowing these guys to be self-regulated is malicious," he said.

For a place priding itself on horse farms and high-tech industries, York Region is dotted with a surprising number of stacks spewing toxic chemicals such as formaldehyde, isopropyl alcohol (the main ingredient in rubbing alcohol) and the organic solvent toluene.

Last year, a group called Pollution Watch revealed York in 1999 was home to two of the three largest sources of potentially cancer-causing air pollution in Canada.

That year, on Hanlan Road in Woodbridge, cushion-foam producer Carpenter Canada Ltd. released 461.32 tonnes (1,017,211 pounds) of dichloromethane, a colourless solvent Health Canada classes as "probably carcinogenic



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Cheryl Stonehouse and her 11-month-old son, Devin, live in an industrial area of Richmond Hill. She complains of fumes from nearby factories.

to humans" to top the list.

Pharmaceutical firm Novopharm released 260.9 tonnes (575,285 pounds) of the same chemical at a Hood Road plant in Markham, with a subdivision just to the east across Warden Avenue. Both companies stopped all use of dichloromethane in 2001.

But in Thornhill last fall, residents used Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights to try to force the Environment Ministry to investigate two kitchen cabinet-makers, Canac Kitchens Ltd. and Raywal Ltd., saying odours around them "had been increasing in strength and frequency" for three years.

"They alleged that the odours were unpleasant, caused coughing and were being emitted into a densely populated residential area" with day cares and schools, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario noted in a recent report.

The ministry refused the residents' request, prompting the ECO, a provincial environment watchdog whose own investigators "encountered strong chemical odours" around both companies during March 2002 site visits, to

conclude the ministry "provided a very weak response" and "very poor customer service" to residents.

Noting both companies are seeking to expand their operations, the watchdog recommended the ministry "work with proponents to ensure that effective solutions are implemented and find ways to involve the public in the process."

The ministry, however, blames the Town of Markham for allowing homes too close to industries.

"It's always buyer beware" for people moving to homes near industrial areas, said John Steele, a ministry spokesperson.

But Sue Skura, who has lived in her home for 20 years and whose children complain of headaches, dizziness and nosebleeds she blames on Canac emissions, said many residents were there first.

"Canac owes us a visit. They need to meet with us and let us know what's going on," said Ms Skura, who, in 1993, helped found a neighbourhood group to deal with Canac, which eventually was charged with illegally discharging a contaminant likely to cause

harmful effects before it changed owners in 1996.

Officials from Raywal and Kohler were surprised this week to hear of the commissioner's report.

Raywal offered no comment. The company, on Green Lane in Thornhill, told it wasn't complying with its emissions agreement during a May 2001 inspection, was in compliance five months later.

A spokesperson from Kohler, Canac's Wisconsin-based parent, said odorous emissions from the John Street plant were reduced 85 per cent over a decade.

"Canac will continue to invest in additional control measures, including expansion of water-based processes, to reduce odour emissions still further," Michael Krenn said.

Mr. Steele said the ministry, which years earlier heard many complaints about Canac, received none at all in 2002. Ms Skura, however, said most residents don't know where to call and speculated there were fewer calls because people are frustrated and apathetic.

"They don't feel their voice means anything anymore."



### INSIGHT INTO EYESIGHT

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