

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING — A CBS "60 Minutes" news team interviewed Mayor John Rabbitt in his City Hall office Tuesday for a report on W.R. Grace & Co.'s involvement in hazardous waste contamination. Mayor Rabbitt (left) talks with producer David Gelber (right) and correspondent Ed Bradley (seated) while an unidentified crew member (center) sets up camera equipment.

(Bob Courneyer photo)

Interviews Mayor Rabbitt

'60 Minutes' investigates Woburn water woes

By LAUREL LUCAS

WOBURN — A CBS "60 Minutes" news team is in town, compiling a story on Woburn's contaminated water problem. "60 Minutes" correspondent Ed Bradley was in City Hall interviewing Mayor John Rabbitt on Tuesday.

Focus : W.R. Grace

White a crew of a half-dozen set up a truckload of cameras, lights and cables in the mayor's office, producer David Gelber took a few minutes to talk about the popular news show's presence in Woburn.

He said "60 Minutes" has been researching the Woburn story for the past few weeks. They planned to shoot interviews Tuesday and Wednesday.

The major focus of the piece will be W.R. Grace & Co. and its Cryovae Division's involvement in Woburn's hazardous waste problem, Gelber said.

He said CBS would be looking at the accusations lodged against W.R. Grace, including possible criminal charges.

(The company is being investigated by a federal grand jury, according to informed sources, for allegedly supplying misinformation to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Daily Times Chronicle recently revealed the existence of that investigation in an exclusive report.)

"We're not making conclusions about Grace's guilt or innocence." Gelber said.

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Several East Woburn families have charged that W.R. Grace contaminated water which supplied wells G and H and that the water caused several children to contract leukemia and other illnesses.

The PBS science series "Nova" plans to air a segment on Woburn's hazardous waste problem, but has agreed not to air its segment before the trial, due to begin in the next month or two.

"Nova's" agreement was made with the judge in the case, who had issued a gag order probibiting participants in the suit from speaking to the news media. "Nova" made the agreement in order to interview

the participants.

Geiber says CBS has made "no such agreement." He would not commit himself to a specific air date, but said the segment would be airing in the next few months and that they are working as fast as possible to get the segment completed.

Gelber said Bradley interviewed Mayor Rabbitt because "we know the mayor has attempted to get some answers from Grace and we want to know if he is satisfied with what he has heard."

He said they plan to get W.R. Grace's side of the story as well.

He would not say who else would be interviewed by "60 Minutes," but said it was a "fair assumption" that it would include some residents.

When asked if CBS would interview anyone from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Gelber said they were "negotiating with the government" about that.

Gelber also joked about the difficulties of on-location shooting in Woburn. "We came up here to investigate a water problem and what we found was a traffic problem," he said.