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Business Bulletin **A Special Background Report** **On Trends in Industry** **And Finance**

“PLUME DATING” spreads as a form of environmental forensics.

Computers and chemistry combine to help scientists and lawyers trace the historical path of water pollutants in a process known as “plume dating.” A key legal question in many cleanup cases is who owned the property when it was first contaminated, says John Simon of Wolff & Samson, Roseland, N.J. “Each one points at the other as being the owner,” Mr. Simon says. He and other lawyers increasingly are turning to high-tech labs for answers.

Richard Greenberg, founder of Environmental Waste Management Associates in Parsippany, N.J., notes that gasoline, for instance, is made up of more than 100 compounds that can be “fingerprinted.” Some 16 of the compounds are used in plume dating, says Dr. Greenberg, who has a doctorate in chemistry. He currently is consulting on a dozen or so such cases.

He says the next wave in cleanup will be replacing excavation and pumping of groundwater with on-site treatments.

— PAMELA SEBASTIAN