

MONDAY, JULY 21, 1986

Toxic Trial

Deliberations enter second week

BOSTON — The jury in the Woburn leukemia trial enters its second week of deliberations today, as the three men and three women went home for the weekend Friday without reaching a verdict.

The U.S. District Court panel has now deliberated for about 24 hours since last Tuesday, when the first phase of the trial, which lasted 78 days, came to a close.

The trial involves a claim by eight East Woburn families that chemicals disposed of on properties owned by W.R. Grace & Co. and formerly owned by Beatrice Foods Co. flowed through groundwater into municipal wells G and H, which were closed in 1979 after 15 years of use.

The properties are Grace's Cryovac manufacturing plant,

369 Washington St., and an undeveloped plot that is part of the Riley Leather Co. tannery, 228 Salem St. Beatrice owned the tannery from 1978 to 1983 and retains environmental liability.

If the jury finds for the defendants, then the trial will be over.

But if the jury finds for the plaintiffs, a second phase of the trial will be held to determine whether the chemicals could have caused leukemia, a disease which the plaintiffs say afflicted eight of their family members, six fatally.

That phase would likely start in September and last several months.

Grace and Beatrice deny they contaminated the wells and further deny the chemicals cause leukemia.