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New Benzene Lawsuit Filed by Worker Who Transported Gasoline to Commercial Fishing Boats

NEW ORLEANS — A new benzene lawsuit has been filed in Louisiana federal court, with the plaintiffs contending that work involving the transport of gasoline to boats for use in a commercial family fishing business caused the toxic exposure.

In the Feb. 24 complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, the plaintiffs say that the exposure caused the development of Acute Myeloid Leukemia.

Plaintiffs Patricia Ann and Merlin Perrin brought the claims, contending that Patricia Ann Perrin was exposed to benzene in gasoline while assisting members of her family in their commercial fishing business for nearly 40 years.

Starting in 1958, Perrin would load gallons of portable gasoline tanks daily that were used as back-up fuel on fishing trips.

“While filling portable gasoline tanks daily from 1958 through 1997 Mrs. Perrin would inhale fumes from the pumping of gasoline, storage of the gasoline portable tanks, cleaning tools daily with gasoline and washing her hands 2-3 times a day with gasoline from 1958 through 1997,” the complaint says. “She would also encounter dermal exposures from washing hands and cleaning tools.”

This exposure led her to develop Acute Myeloid Leukemia, the lawsuit says.

“Through industry and medical studies unknown to plaintiffs, the defendants knew or should have known of the health hazards inherent in the products they manufactured, distributed, sold, supplied, owned, transported, or used,” the plaintiffs allege. “The actions or inactions of the defendants constitute gross negligence and demonstrate a reckless disregard for the rights and safety of others. Furthermore, the defendants committed numerous tortious acts that include, without limitation, negligently misrepresenting, concealing, suppressing, and omitting material information about the health effects of benzene and precautionary measures in regard thereto, as specifically alleged below.”

The lawsuit asserts causes of action for negligence, strict product liability and compensatory damages.

The plaintiffs also invoke the discovery rule, contending that they did not become aware of the cause of Perrin’s illness until Feb. 2014.

The plaintiffs are represented by L. Eric Williams Jr. of the Williams Law Office in Metairie, La.; and Richard

J. Fernandez and Amber E. Cisney of the Law Offices of Richard J. Fernandez LLC in Metairie, La.

Perrin, et al. v. Shell Oil Company, et al., No. 14-00414 (E.D. La.).

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