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Family of Former Machinist Files Benzene-Related Lawsuit in Louisiana Federal Court

NEW ORLEANS — The family of a former machinist has filed a lawsuit in Louisiana federal court, contending that exposure to benzene-containing products caused him to develop chronic lymphocytic leukemia.

In the April 8 lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, the plaintiffs maintained that Gulf Oil Corp., which has since merged into Chevron USA Inc., operated the refinery at which the decedent worked.

The plaintiffs filed the lawsuit on behalf of James Robertson Sr., saying that his work for Brown & Root as a machinist from 1970 to 1986 at the Alliance Refinery caused him to come into contact with benzene-containing products.

While employed, Robertson performed new construction, additions and turn-arounds, cleaning his hands and washing his tools with benzene daily.

As a result of the exposure, Robertson developed chronic lymphocytic leukemia. He died in Sept. 2014, the lawsuit said.

According to the plaintiffs, the defendant knew, or should have known, about the causal relationship between benzene and cancer-related illnesses.

“The defendant failed to warn Mr. Robertson and other similarly situated workers about the health hazards associated with benzene,” the complaint alleged. “The defendant breached duties, which they owed to Mr. Robertson and the plaintiffs to exercise proper care in manufacturing and selling their respective products.”

The lawsuit asserts causes of action for negligence, gross negligence, strict product liability, and Former Article 2317 liability.

Counsel for the plaintiffs are L. Eric Williams of the Williams Law Office LLC in Metairie, La.

Robertson, et al. v. Chevron USA Inc. No. 15-01106 (E.D. La.).

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