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Pipefitter Allegedly Exposed to Benzene While Working at Shell, Gulf Oil, Dow Chemical Facilities

NEW ORLEANS — Plaintiffs in Louisiana have asserted a lawsuit on behalf of a former pipefitter, saying that he was exposed to benzene-containing products while working at the facilities owned by Shell Chemical, Gulf Oil, and Dow Chemical.

In the April 29 complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, the plaintiff said that Wilson Joseph Leonard developed cancer as a result of the exposure.

The plaintiffs allege in the complaint that Wilson Joseph Leonard Jr. was exposed to benzene-containing products while working as a pipefitter from 1967 to 1981 at Shell Chemical, Gulf Oil, and Dow Chemical facilities.

At the defendants' premises, Leonard performed new construction and turnarounds, the complaint said.

Leonard also built oil field equipment for Shell Oil for five years in the 1980s, the plaintiffs said.

As a result of his exposure to crude oil, toluene, xylene, benzene and gasoline, Leonard developed chronic myelogenous leukemia.

“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 actions or inactions of the defendants constitute gross negligence and demonstrate a reckless disregard for the rights and safety of others,” the complaint said.

The lawsuit asserts causes of action for negligence, gross negligence, premises liability, and strict product liability.

Counsel for the plaintiffs are L. Eric Williams of the Williams Law Office in Metairie, La.; and Mickey P. Landry, Frank J. Swarr, Philip C. Hoffman, Amanda J. Ballay and Matthew C. Clark of Landry & Swarr in New Orleans.

Leonard, et al. v. Shell Oil Co., et al., No. 15-01390 (E.D. La.).

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HarrisMartin Publishing - 30 Washington Avenue, Suite D-3, Haddonfield, NJ 08033

(610) 647-5500 - www.harrismartin.com - service@harrismartin.com