

Lawsuit Filed on Behalf of Three Generation Family in Carson, CA Suffering from Exposure to Toxic Levels of Hydrogen Sulfide for Over a Month

11.04.2021

Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy LLP filed a lawsuit on behalf of a three generation Carson family who has been inhaling high levels of Hydrogen Sulfide for over a month. This suit follows a class action complaint filed by CPM two weeks prior, and seeks damages for personal injuries including respiratory issues, headaches, nausea, dizziness, confusion, and exacerbated asthma. Plaintiff and matriarch Gracie Martinez is 79 years old and has lived in the City of Carson for 60 years. The elderly (in addition to children, pregnant women, and individuals with underlying chronic health conditions) are especially susceptible to chemical exposure, including exposure to Hydrogen Sulfide.

The Complaint, the first of many to follow, alleges that fugitive discharge of Hydrogen Sulfide from Marathon Petroleum Corporation's Los Angeles refinery (the largest oil refinery on the West Coast) is a significant factor contributing to Carson's ongoing health crisis.

In the early morning hours of September 16, the Marathon Oil Refinery saw an unprecedented spike in its fence line monitor Hydrogen Sulfide readings. The monitor measured H₂S at nearly 290 parts per billion ("ppb"), which the Complaint alleges suggests a fugitive discharge. Plaintiffs further allege that the Marathon Refinery, which is located adjacent to the Dominguez Channel, discharges directly into the Channel. As alleged in the Complaint, fugitive Hydrogen Sulfide and other sulfur compounds from the Marathon Refinery mixed and interacted with other chemicals in the Channel over the following weeks to produce a substantial and ongoing release of significantly elevated Hydrogen Sulfide levels emanating from the Channel.

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Practice Areas

Environmental Law

LAWSUIT FILED ON BEHALF OF THREE GENERATION FAMILY IN CARSON, CA SUFFERING FROM EXPOSURE TO TOXIC LEVELS OF HYDROGEN SULFIDE FOR OVER A MONTH

Hydrogen Sulfide, also known as “sewer gas,” has a strong and offensive odor and, at elevated levels like these, causes illnesses like headaches, nausea, and fatigue. Carson residents have been sickened by Hydrogen Sulfide exposure for over a month, yet no company or individual has stepped forward to accept responsibility for the ongoing environmental disaster.

The Complaint seeks compensation for injuries, relocation expenses, and punitive damages, among other things. CPM’s investigation into other responsible parties is ongoing.

“I have lived in Carson all my life. I own a business in Carson. This is my community, and we are suffering. My family cannot relocate because my mother is wheelchair bound, and I feel like a prisoner in my own home. It is just not fair to the people of my diverse community. It breaks my heart.”

- Florence Sanchez, Plaintiff and Lifelong Carson Resident

“Local refineries’ repeated failures to adequately prevent dangerous emissions are making their neighbors sick. The fact that this incident has led to unbearable and unsafe air quality for over a month is inexcusable.”

- **Theresa Vitale** of Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy

*“The air in Carson is toxic. Hydrogen Sulfide is not safe to breathe at these levels. This community suffers 24/7. Our lawsuit will hold liable **every** company who has significantly contributed to this ongoing environmental disaster.”*

- **Gary Praglin** of Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy

The Plaintiffs are represented by Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy. Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy has been filing cases to keep the environment safe and clean for over 50 years, including the recently settled SoCalGas Aliso Canyon Well Blowout case against SoCalGas and Sempra Energy.