



B. Braun Sued Over Alleged Cancer Cases Linked To Pa. Plant

By Matt Fair

Law360 (May 5, 2021, 4:45 PM EDT) -- B. Braun Medical Inc. was hit with more than a dozen lawsuits in Pennsylvania state court on Tuesday alleging that emissions from the company's Lehigh County plant caused neighbors to develop sometimes fatal cancer cases.

The neighbors said in complaints filed in the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas that the B. Braun facility pumped so much toxic ethylene oxide into the air from its Hanover Township plant so frequently that residents in the area face a cancer risk at least 200 times higher than that of the average Pennsylvanian.

"This plant is deadly," said Shanin Specter, an attorney with Kline & Specter PC representing the alleged victims. "Its dangerous emissions need to be curtailed now and the wrongful harms must be compensated and punished quickly and fairly."

According to the complaints, which are substantially similar, B. Braun has been using ethylene oxide at the plant since at least the late 1980s to sterilize medical equipment and devices.

In the years after the chemical began being used at the plant, however, the complaints said that the International Agency for Research on Cancer declared ethylene oxide a human carcinogen. The chemical went on to receive similar designations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2000 and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in

2016.

Despite the growing consensus surrounding the chemical's health risks, B. Braun has continued to use it while ignoring other viable options to effectively and more safely sterilize equipment and medical devices, the complaints said.

Meanwhile, the residents allege that B. Braun's use of ethylene oxide at the Hanover plant has only grown over the years.

Pointing to EPA data, the complaints said that the facility had recently been named the 12th largest emitter of ethylene oxide in the country and that it accounted for 92% of all ethylene oxide emitted into the air in Pennsylvania in 2014.

B. Braun finally committed in November 2019 to substantially lowering its emissions of ethylene oxide, but by then, the damage for many nearby residents had already been done, according to the complaints.

"[B. Braun] failed to implement sufficient controls to limit [or] eliminate the emissions of [ethylene oxide] coming from [the] plant and, consequently, thousands of residents in surrounding areas, including plaintiff, were exposed to a known human carcinogen that greatly increases their likelihood of developing cancer," the residents said in their complaints.

A representative for B. Braun did not immediately return a message seeking comment on Wednesday afternoon.

The plaintiffs are represented by Shanin Specter, Thomas Bosworth and Aaron Dunbar of Kline & Specter PC.

Counsel for the defendants was not immediately available.