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3 died, 13 others were stricken with cancer due to B. Braun pollution, lawsuit says

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B. Braun Medical Inc. Corporate Headquarters at 824 12th Ave. in Bethlehem is seen Oct. 22, 2013. Matt Smith | lehighvalleylive.com contributor

By [Rudy Miller](#) | For lehighvalleylive.com

Sixteen people stricken with cancer, including the families of three who died, say emissions from medical products manufacturer B. Braun are to blame for their cancer diagnoses, according to lawsuits filed on their behalf.

The lawsuits were filed on behalf of people who lived, worked, and spent significant time near B. Braun's Hanover Township, Lehigh County, plant and contracted cancer, according to a news release issued by the Philadelphia law firm [Kline & Specter](#). The news release blames emissions of ethylene oxide for causing people to contract cancer. The colorless gas "has been linked to breast cancer, leukemia and Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, among other cancers," the news release says.

B. Braun says on its [website](#) that the federal and state environmental regulatory agencies have not raised compliance issues with B. Braun over its ethylene oxide emissions. The news release from Kline & Specter, however, says that law firm has filed complaints with

the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to “investigate the matter and order remediation.”

B. Braun’s [website](#) says the company has reduced its emissions over the last several years and its emissions are 10% below limits imposed under its state air permit. The Kline & Specter release says B. Braun emits a significant amount of the gas. It emitted 6,880 pounds of EtO in 2014 while the only other entity emitting the chemical gas in the region was St. Luke’s University Hospital, which released 17 pounds that year, the news release says.

A [fact sheet](#) on B. Braun’s [website](#) says ethylene oxide is the only available alternative to sterilize some medical products. Kline & Specter’s release disputes that claim.

“Even if EtO is used, there are controls and devices that can greatly reduce emissions,” the Kline & Specter release says.

Three of the plaintiffs have died due to cancer, seven are suffering with breast cancer, two with brain cancer, two with types of blood cancer and one has a form of urogynecologic cancer, the Kline & Specter news release says.

The lawsuits filed in Philadelphia County Court claim negligence, strict liability, public and private nuisance, fraud and misrepresentation, and seek punitive as well as compensatory damages.

“This plant is deadly. Its dangerous emissions need to be curtailed now and the wrongful harms must be compensated and punished quickly and fairly,” said Shanin Specter, who is representing the plaintiffs with co-counsel Tom Bosworth and Aaron Dunbar.

B. Braun spokeswoman Allison Longenhagen issued this statement:

“These lawsuits are completely without merit. B. Braun Medical will mount a decisive and vigorous defense to protect our good name and reputation.

“Reported data from the Pennsylvania Cancer Registry shows that cancer rates in municipalities around B. Braun’s Allentown facility are comparable to other areas of Pennsylvania for the five cancer types that the EPA claims to be potentially related to EtO exposure.

“B. Braun’s dedication to safety and sustainability is evident in every product that we produce and in every patient touched by our life-saving medical devices, many of which are essential to the fight against COVID-19.”

Germany-based B. Braun [manufactures medical products](#) around the world. It has local facilities in the Lehigh Valley, including an office in Bethlehem and the plant on Marcon Boulevard in Lehigh County.

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Rudy Miller may be reached at rmiller@lehighvalleylive.com.