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## Lawsuit Asks Chemical Companies To Compensate East Chicago Residents

ANNIE ROFEIK   

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East Chicago residents are taking additional legal action over high levels of lead and arsenic found around their homes.

A new lawsuit is the first to single out DuPont and Atlantic Richfield, two chemical companies that have taken on legally responsibility for the hazards.

Attorney Thomas Zimmerman filed the suit last week in federal court on behalf of residents who have to move out of East Chicago's West Calumet Housing Complex.

It's on the site of a former lead refinery run by companies now owned by Atlantic Richfield, and it's near a DuPont pesticide plant. ([See a timeline here.](#))

In 2014, the two companies agreed to pay the Environmental Protection Agency \$26 million to help clean up the area.

"But that does not compensate the residents for the inconvenience and expense associated with the disruption of their lives, and having to find a new place to live and move," Zimmerman says.

He wants DuPont and Atlantic Richfield to pay for West Calumet residents to move out or find temporary housing and to clean their belongings. He's also seeking damages for "aggravations" the contamination has caused, such as not being able to play outside or garden in contaminated soil.

"[And] if we're able to connect up individual health effects from the lead and arsenic," Zimmerman adds, "then, certainly, we would seek compensation for whatever medical expenses and damages to their health that the physicians feel there are."

Zimmerman has asked the court to make his suit a class-action on behalf of the more than 1,000 people who live in West Calumet.

It's the only lawsuit so far that focuses solely on DuPont and Atlantic Richfield. Other suits filed for residents in recent months have named the companies alongside city officials, or not at all.

"We decided to name the businesses because they were the ones who polluted the site," Zimmerman says.

DuPont spokesman Dan Turner says in an email that DuPont spin-off Chemours "has assumed responsibility for liabilities related to this site."

Chemours is DuPont's performance chemicals division, which became a separate company in 2015. A spokesperson there did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

An Atlantic Richfield spokesman says only that the company, which is owned by BP, is complying with the EPA agreement.



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Nick Janzen/PBS