

# METRO

# Amoco Cancer claims grow

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For the first time, a non-Amoco employee is contending that he developed brain cancer because of something he was exposed to while working at BP Amoco's Naperville research complex.

A lawsuit being filed today by Richard Bernhagen, 71, is among the latest suits blaming the global oil giant for the cancers workers developed. Two other suits are being brought by the estates of former Amoco employees.

Nearly all of the 10 other lawsuits, which include 21 plaintiffs, involve longtime Amoco staffers who worked at the Naperville complex's 500 Building in the 1970s and 1980s. Only one other suit has been filed by an outside contractor. He claims he developed liver cancer as a result of his work there.

The suit by an outside contractor with brain cancer is significant because there has been no widespread company effort to contact non-Amoco employees to be

## Lawsuit expands

## legal battleground

checked for health problems, said G. Grant Dixon III, an attorney with the Chicago firm Corboy & Demetrio who is filing the suits in Cook County Circuit Court.

"There is a whole spectrum of people Amoco has not wanted to acknowledge," Dixon said. "These are people who worked side by side, elbow to elbow, with Amoco employees. Some of them worked there for years."

There are other contractors who spent time there working on systems such as heating and air conditioning, he said.

Bernhagen was a sheet metal worker who did duct work at the research center.

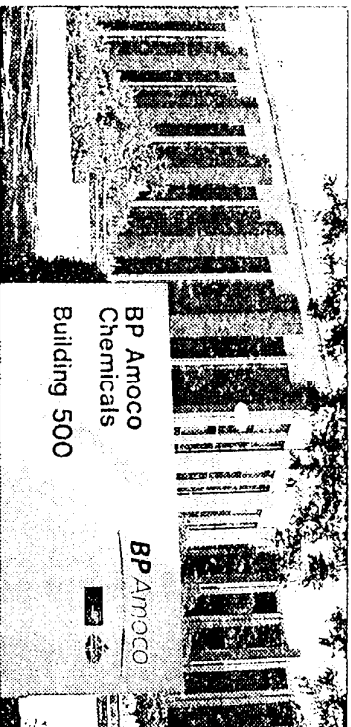
Also suing today are the estates of William Wohler, an engineer who died at age 55 in August 1983, and Walter Kus, a senior laborator-

ry technician who was 50 when he died in February 1998.

The mystery of why employees who worked at the high-tech research lab—among the company's biggest—developed cancer has dogged Amoco since the late 1980s. In 1998, the year British Petroleum and Amoco merged, the company acknowledged that the portion of people working at the facility who developed brain cancer was as much as eight times what could have been expected. Studies also have found that people working there are generally healthier than the overall population.

In August, BP Amoco released the results of a multimillion dollar study that concluded six reports of employees developing a specific type of brain cancer, a glioma, were probably job-related. But no cause was pinpointed.

A month later, BP Amoco asked a judge to dismiss all the lawsuits, saying none of the complaints had merit. That motion is pending. The company has spent millions

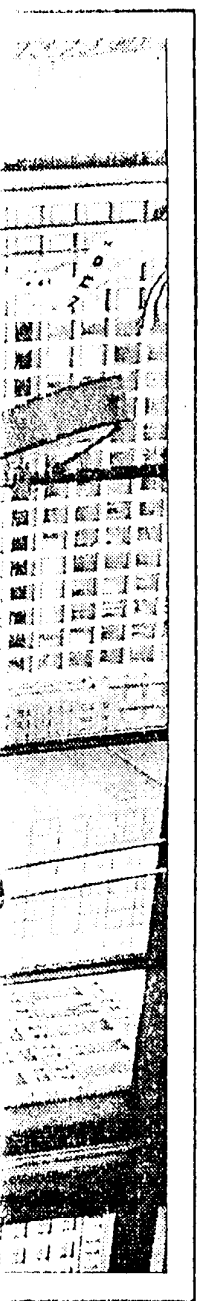


RICH HEIN SUN-TIMES  
Several BP Amoco staffers have developed brain cancer while working in this building at the company's research complex in Naperville.

of dollars providing medical treatment for employees who developed cancer or who want a cancer screening, said Amoco spokeswoman Vicki Kastory.

"The health and well-being of the people who worked at the facility is our top priority," she said. The effort to offer aid "is separate from the legal side of things,"

Kastory said. The Amoco study, which took three years, did not include outside contractors, Kastory said. Researchers lacked medical background on those workers and were unable to contact many of them, she said. The company has extended offers of medical help to some contract employees, but Kastory said she did not know how many.



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