

# METRO

# Amoco Cancer Study Delayed

## Research has been spotty, attorney says

By MARK SKERTIC

ST. BERNARD REPORTER

Researchers investigating why at least 20 people working at BP Amoco's Naperville research center developed brain tumors have told the company they are not ready to release their findings.

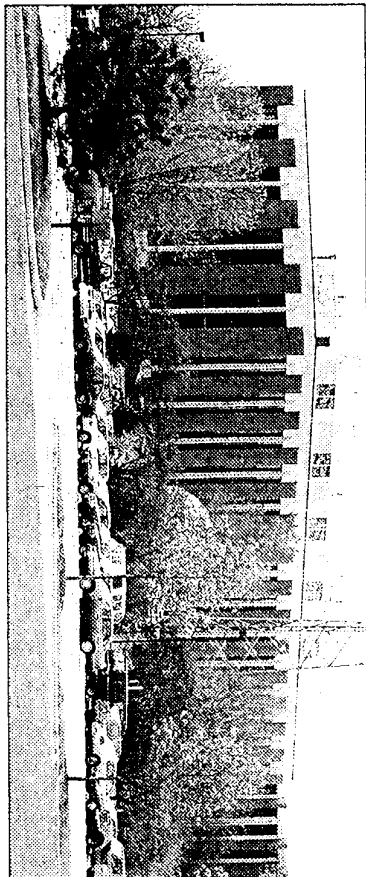
The report, which had been expected in January and then in May, could be available in July, said Jim Fair, a spokesman for the oil giant.

"We're fairly close to the study being completed," he said. "That's different from saying we know all the causes."

Delays in the release of the three-year study and suspicions that the analysis will be incomplete have upset and frustrated some who developed cancer after working at the sprawling research complex.

Although Amoco has trumpeted the fact that the study will include reviews of stacks of records and interviews with thousands of former employees, there are those who developed cancer who were never talked to, said G. Grant Dixon III, an attorney at Corboy and Demetrio who represents several former Amoco employees.

"I represent one who had cancer, died and



RICH HENK, SUN-TIMES

**Preliminary research found that white men who worked at one Amoco Research Center building had a higher cancer rate than the general population's.**

he was never contacted, nor was his family," Dixon said. A suit on behalf of the man has not yet been filed.

The discovery of more victims is crucial because the rates of some types of cancer recorded among former workers is among the things that have worried researchers. In October, preliminary findings showed that the rate of gliomas recorded among white men who worked in the complex's Building 503 was 15 times that of the general population. Add more cases to what researchers know of and the rate jumps even more.

Dixon will be in court later this month on a motion to consolidate some of the cases

against Amoco. He represents six of the at least 19 who have sued the company. All of them allege Amoco allowed employees to be exposed to toxic chemicals. Several of the suits were filed on the last day of 1998, hours before Amoco Corp. merged with British Petroleum Co.

At least five research center employees have died of malignant brain tumors. Several years ago, the company hired researchers from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Johns Hopkins University to study the cases and determine if the cancers were brought on by the work environment. Dixon questioned the way some of the

8,000 former employees have been treated. One of his clients, Irwin Ginsburg, who worked for Amoco for 27 years, was assigned to the Naperville complex when it opened in 1970 and stayed there for several years.

"Instead of dealing with the problem on a personal level, they appear to be dealing with it as a technical problem, like the ones they run into in an engineering setting," said Ginsburg, who now lives in Tennessee. He was found to have malignant thyroid cancer, which was removed with surgery.

Although Amoco's awareness of the problem began in at least 1988, Ginsburg said he was not contacted until 1998. "And even then, I received no personal contact," he said. "Just a letter."

The Naperville investigation is one of two involving long-term studies on the effect of Amoco facilities on public health that could be released this year. In Missouri last month, some residents of Sugar Creek, a Kansas City suburb, were upset that federal researchers said they were unable to link local health problems to a former Amoco refinery. The finding came after 10 years of investigation.

The analysis' findings have not affected the legal process. Two property owners have successfully sued Amoco for \$1 million, alleging the refinery allowed toxic chemicals to leak onto their land. Other residents of Sugar Creek and the city of nearby Independence have also sued the company claiming environmental mismanagement.