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National Journal's Daily Energy Briefing

January 6, 1999, Wednesday

SECTION: NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

LENGTH: 400 words

HEADLINE: LAWSUITS: Illinois Workers Say Amoco Caused Tumor Cases

BODY:

Amoco Corp. was hit on 12/31/98 with five liability lawsuits that charge the company with sloppy handling of toxic chemicals, exacerbated by a defective air-circulation system at Amoco's Naperville research center in Illinois.

The "flurry" of suits came on the last day of Amoco's existence -- its merger with British Petroleum Co. took effect the next day. The suits stem from the 20 reported cases of cancerous head tumors at the research center. One suit is on behalf of a woman who worked in the center and has been diagnosed with a malignant form of cancer called glioma. Amoco says the suits came as a surprise; the company said it was not aware of a glioma diagnosed in a female employee.

G. Grant Dixon, who represents all five plaintiffs: "We can demonstrate that Amoco knew without a doubt that they were having air-circulation problems and that they were circulating known toxic chemicals in the building with air-handling problems." Amoco spokesperson Scott Dean did not comment on the suits (Sallie Gaines, Chicago Tribune, 1/5).

Amoco Also Faces Suit In Missouri

In Missouri, two families are suing Amoco Oil Co., alleging that their property values have fallen because of pollution from the oil giant's Sugar Creek refinery.

The Missouri Dept. of Health has been investigating a possible link between emissions from the now-closed refinery and the confirmed 36 cases of cancer in Sugar Creek and the 38 additional reported cases in the town of 4,000. Amoco on 1/4 argued that the trial, which is set for 1/19, should be moved from the area because the jury pool has been biased by media reports. Circuit Judge Don Kennedy said he would issue a decision soon on moving the trial (Brian Burnes, Kansas City Star, 1/4).

Chevron Accused Of Exposing Residents To Benzene

Nine Houston residents have filed a lawsuit in state court against Chevron USA and two environmental cleanup companies, claiming that a 5/98 Chevron pipeline break exposed them to toxic chemicals and damaged their properties.

The suit demands that Chevron, Los Angeles-based Dames & Moore Group and Houston-based Garner Environmental Services, Inc., pay for medical evaluations, site cleanup, and other damages. William Rosch, attorney for the residents, says that a high concentration of benzene was found in the ground after the pipeline break (Ron Nissimov, Houston Chronicle, 1/4).

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: January 6, 1999