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## **Lawsuit seeks relief for South Memphis neighborhood near potentially dangerous toxins**

Kayla Solomon

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. - There is now a class action lawsuit to help people living in one South Memphis neighborhood.

It is part of an effort to get relief for folks who may have lasting health problems from living near Sterilization Services of Tennessee.

The Environmental Protection Services (EPA) says since 1979, the facility has been emitting ethylene oxide, a carcinogen that the federal group has since determined is harmful to people who breathe it in.

The lawsuit, which is about 20 pages long with eight plaintiffs, outlined just some of the lingering health problems people have.

“This is a community where the life expectancy is the lowest in Shelby County and in TN,” said KeShaun Pearson, president of Memphis Community Against Pollution, or MCAP.

For decades, people who grew up in South Memphis said they have watched family and friends get sick.

Pearson was one of them.

“It’s painful to watch the families I grew up with continue to experience the burden of cancer,” he said.

Now, he said a new class action lawsuit against the corporation could provide a little solace to the people who need it most.

“If our community partners do benefit economically, that is a good first step. It is not and it never could restore what has been lost.”

The lawsuit, filed in circuit court last week, has eight plaintiffs listed who all lived within four miles of the building.

It said in part, ‘Due to exposure to the poisoned air, the named Plaintiffs have suffered severe injuries, including miscarriages, birth defects, brain cancer, blood cancer, stomach cancer, lymphoma, leukemia, and breast cancer – and one has died as a result.’

There is more than just one class action suit.

FOX13 found 16 more individual lawsuits filed against Sterilization Services of Tennessee, some from former workers, others from people who live within miles.

Paul Napoli, a partner with New York-based firm Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, said it is about time people get answers.

“People become aware of it, they start to put two and two together. They start to realize ‘maybe my breast cancer was not just God, it really had some man-made effect that affected my body,’” said Napoli.

He said there is a list of requirements necessary for someone to join the lawsuit, like symptoms and diagnosed diseases, but he says they’re expecting to get more attention as time goes on.

“We’re going to be concentrating on the people that still live in Memphis in the community but I would not be surprised if we start hearing from people around the country who moved to FL or moved to Nashville and other parts of the country,” he said.

Another member of the legal team is Luke Sanderson of Wampler, Carroll, Wilson & Sanderson.

He said this is not just an issue of the past.

“In a lot of cases, it’s difficult for people to understand what they’ve been through and understand the cause for some of these problems but we believe we’ve found the culprit and we look forward to holding them accountable,” said Sanderson.

To find out more about the class action lawsuit, you can get more information by:

Checking out this page on the Napoli Shkolnik PLLC.

Or by calling Wampler, Carroll, Wilson & Sanderson at 901-523-1844.

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