

The Intelligencer

Former Warminster base resident sues foam manufacturers

By Jenny Wagner

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A Florida man who lived on the former Warminster military base as a teenager and developed testicular cancer twice as an adult is suing several manufacturers of firefighting foams, used for decades at area military bases and believed to be the source the perfluorinated chemicals PFOS and PFOA found in groundwater and drinking water.

A Florida man who lived on a former Warminster military base as a teenager and developed testicular cancer twice as an adult is suing several manufacturers of firefighting foams.

The firefighting foams, used for decades at the former Naval Air Warfare Center and other nearby bases are believed to be the source the perfluorinated chemicals PFOS and PFOA found in area groundwater and drinking water.

Philadelphia-based Cuker Law Firm and Napoli Shkolnik, of Marlton, New Jersey, filed the lawsuit Friday in Montgomery County court on behalf of John Eynon, 44, of Jupiter, Florida. It names The 3M Co., Angus Fire, Ansul, Buckeye Fire Protection Co., Chemguard and National Foam as defendants.

According to the lawsuit, Eynon's father was a Navy officer and his family lived in military housing at the corner of Jacksonville Road and Eddowes Drive in Ivyland from mid-1986 to mid-1988, when he was about 12 to 14 years old.

"Life was fine. I didn't think anything of the base and the firefighting and the foam," Eynon said in an interview Tuesday. "That wasn't something I thought twice about."

But during that time, Eynon “regularly ingested water obtained from the Warminster base, which is now known to have been contaminated with (the chemicals),” the lawsuit states. “As a result of his exposure to PFOA and PFOS (Eynon) has suffered testicular cancer two times, as well as stress and anxiety as a result of cancer and a recurrence of cancer.”

Eynon was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 1996 when he was 21 — shortly after he married his first wife — and then again 10 years later in 2006, according to the lawsuit.

“It’s definitely created some personal challenges in my life,” Eynon said. “Between my first wife ... we were married at such a young age, and then going through something like that, not once but twice ... it definitely affected our relationship.”

Eynon has a child from his first marriage but he can’t have any more. That affected his second marriage, as well as his current relationship, he said.

Eynon’s family moved around after they left the Warminster base and he eventually ended up in southern Florida. It wasn’t until a couple of years ago when he took a job with a company based in King of Prussia that he learned of the drinking water contamination from coworkers and “put two and two together.”

“They told me what was going on and I was just really shocked,” he said. “My family doesn’t have a history of cancer — I was the first in my family among my immediate family, but also my extended family. ... I was always wondering, why me? Why did it happen to me?”

Eynon’s case is similar to others that have been working their way through federal and county courts over the last two years. The lawsuit alleges the foam manufacturers were “well aware” of the health risks posed by the chemicals and the dangers of selling the products because it was “inevitable” that they would migrate off the bases and into drinking water. The manufacturers failed to warn users, or recall the products after they were taken off the market, according to the lawsuit.

Some studies have linked the chemicals to health effects including some cancers such as testicular cancer, according to the lawsuit.

“Injuries, however, are not sudden; rather, they can arise months, years or decades after exposure to PFOS and/or PFOA,” the lawsuit states.

“Essentially this was a Frankenstein monster of a chemical,” Eynon’s attorney, Mark Cuker, added. “The Frankenstein monster is out there — they finally stopped putting more of them out there — but it’s in people’s water and bodies.”

Eynon’s lawsuit is seeking more than \$50,000 for pain and suffering and costs of medical monitoring, treatment and other damages.

This news organization contacted the foam manufacturers for comment Tuesday afternoon and did not receive immediate responses other than from 3M, which said it will “vigorously defend this lawsuit.”

“The substantial body of scientific evidence does not support the conclusion that these chemistries adversely impact human health at the current exposure levels,” the company stated. “3M acted responsibly at all times and will defend its record of stewardship in connection with its manufacturing and sale of AFFF.”