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Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

Northrop Grumman Hit With \$500M Chemical Exposure Suit

By **Adam Lidgett**

Law360, New York (September 16, 2016, 1:30 PM EDT) -- A group of Long Island residents have filed a \$500 million proposed class action in New York state supreme court against Northrop Grumman, alleging the defense contractor exposed the residents to toxic chemicals that came from its manufacturing operations.

The 15 Bethpage, New York, residents said that for nearly six decades, the company generated and disposed of toxic contaminants and byproducts from the airplane, weapons and satellite manufacturing operations at its facilities and other landfills as part of routine business, resulting in extensive pollution in the area. The proposed class said the company didn't fairly warn them of the alleged contamination in the more than 600-acre area.

"The defendants intentionally and/or negligently failed to adequately warn or advise plaintiffs and the class and other members of the public as to the nature, extent, composition, effects and location of the contamination, the fact that plaintiffs and the class and their property were being exposed to the contamination, the nature of the contaminants and risks could change over time and that exposure to the contamination could likely cause life-threatening and permanent adverse health effects," the proposed class said in its complaint filed Tuesday.

While manufacturing airplanes and weapons for the U.S. Department of Defense, Northrop Grumman disposed of certain cancer-causing chemicals such as arsenic, cadmium, lead, mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls and volatile organic compounds that led to extensive pollution, the proposed class said.

Since 2005, there has been an ongoing investigation of a contamination plume emanating from a community park in the area that was once owned by the company, the proposed class alleged.

The residents said the plumes contaminants have migrated to their properties and have led to serious health concerns and personal property damage. The suit said the residents have been exposed to the chemicals in water, air and soil. Some of the residents of the proposed class have developed certain diseases, including breast cancer and non-Hodgkin lymphoma, the complaint said.

Louise Caro, head of the environmental department at Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, the firm that filed the suit, said time is of the essence.

"The company has a history of taking a very long time to get things resolved," Caro said. "The people really needed to get some relief from the courts here."

The proposed class is asking for personal injury and property damage claims and for a medical monitoring program to research the effects of the exposure to the toxic chemicals alleged in the suit and to monitor the health of people in the area, according to the suit.

Northrop Grumman spokesman Vic Beck said the company has not been served with the suit as of Friday morning, but that from what the company knows of the complaint, the allegations appear to not have any merit.

"Northrop Grumman continues, as it has done for several decades, to work in close coordination with federal, state and local environmental and health authorities to address legacy environmental conditions and protect the residents in the Bethpage area," he said in a statement.

Counsel information for Northrop Grumman was not immediately available Friday

The proposed class is represented by Robert Gitelman, Paul J. Napoli and Patrick J. Lanciotti of Napoli Shkolnik PLLC.

The case is Rosalie Romano et al v. Northrop Grumman Corporation et al, case number 607036/2016, in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, Nassau County.

--Editing by Patricia K. Cole.

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