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EFFECTS OF CRUDE OIL EXPOSURE

Effects of Crude Oil Exposure to Children, Adults, and Pregnant Mothers

By Professor of Toxicology in Texas

Crude Oil has been pouring into the Gulf of Mexico and is causing numerous and significant health issues for children, pregnant mothers, and adults. Exposure occurs via inhalation, ingestion (of liquid droplets in the air), and direct skin contact. Some of the health effects will be long-term sequelae and may last a lifetime or affect future generations. Crude oil is a known teratogen and can cause birth defects and changes in fetal development. The target organs for crude oil are the hematopoietic (blood forming) system, lymphatic system, nervous system, and reproductive system. The Benzene component is a known carcinogen.

Health Effects on Children and Pregnant Mothers

Any chemical that can cross the placenta influences the development of the embryo and fetus. This is particularly true at the time when cells are dividing and differentiating into specific tissues of the nervous, circulatory, and immune systems. According to the World Health Organization, the embryo, fetus, or child is particularly sensitive to even minute concentrations of toxic chemicals. Crude oil and its components are known teratogens and cause birth defects, changes in fetal development, and decreased fetal survival.

Health Effects on Adults

Breathing the fumes from crude oil are known to cause chemical pneumonia, irritation of the nose, throat, and lungs, headache, dizziness, drowsiness, loss of coordination, fatigue, nausea, and labored breathing. Chronic exposure can result in irregular heartbeats, convulsions, and coma.

What is Crude Oil?

The American Petroleum Institute's Manifesto on Crude Oil (CAS #8002-05-09; (a.k.a. Sweet Crude, Arab Medium, West Texas Inter-Cushing, Earth Oil, Petroleum Oil, Rock Oil, Zafiro) starts with a definition of the Crude Oil that is now pouring into the Gulf of Mexico and all related wetlands:

"A complex combination of hydrocarbons. It consists predominantly of aliphatic, alicyclic and aromatic hydrocarbons. It may also contain small amounts of nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur compounds. This category encompasses light, medium, and heavy petroleums, as well as the oils extracted from tar sands".

Specifically Crude Oil (CAS #8002-05-9) contains Benzene, Butane, N-Hexane, Isopentane, Pentane, and Stoddard Solvent. Benzene is a known human carcinogen and is identified by NTP, OSHA, and IARC as a Group 1 carcinogen. Chronic inhalation of minute levels of benzene causes leukemia and other types of cancers.

Long-Term Sequelae

Acute contact, via inhalation and skin, with small amounts of light crude oil and dispersants cause transitory respiratory, vomiting, diarrhea, and skin reactions. However, long-term exposure, which can be a matter of days or weeks, can cause central nervous system problems, or do damage to blood and organs such as kidneys or livers, according to the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention. There is also a significant increase in the risk of cancer.

Crude oil is not readily biodegradable and the effects of exposure to this toxin will be felt from generation to generation. Children and pregnant mothers are at significant risk. As a Toxicologist, I utilize the Bradford Hill Criteria of Causation, the methodology accepted by the scientific and medical community, in the correlation of all incidences of exposure and resultant health issues.

There are numerous experts who are more than willing to provide testimony for medical malpractice and personal injury litigation cases. Finding the right one is crucial to the strength of your particular case.

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