

THE DAILY NEWS

Workers sue after BP denies fume reports

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TEXAS CITY — A group of refinery workers filed a federal lawsuit Monday, charging BP with negligence in a reported leak that BP officials said might not have happened.

At least 112 workers went to area hospitals Thursday night, complaining of nausea and what BP spokesman Scott Dean called “flu-like symptoms.”

However, Dean also said the company had not found any sign of a hazardous leak, despite monitoring the oil-processing unit where workers fell ill.

Attorney Anthony Buzbee filed the negligence lawsuit Monday at Galveston’s U.S. district courthouse, on behalf of about 10 of the contractors. Buzbee said many of his clients suffered injuries after passing out and falling off of scaffolds and other structures.

The lawsuit alleges BP was negligent because it had no device to detect, prevent or warn of a hazardous leak, among other reasons.

BP spokesman Neil Chapman said Monday that he could not comment on Buzbee’s claims, as BP had not yet been served with a copy of the lawsuit. However, he said BP still had not found proof of a leak.

“We are still investigating,” he said. “However, we’ve not yet been able to identify that a leak occurred or what it might have been. We’ve got to work through the possibilities.”

In the lawsuit, Buzbee accuses BP of a cover-up that he called “part of a series of blunders at the Texas City plant.”

Chapman said BP handled safety concerns properly Thursday night on behalf of the workers and area residents.

“When we know of an issue, the first thing we do is alert the proper authorities and start the communication process with the community, as soon as possible,” he said. “We want people working, who might be closely affected, to be looked after. Their safety is paramount.”

Buzbee is also seeking a temporary restraining order to require BP to identify the

substance and to bar the company “from destroying or altering any evidence of the leak or the substance leaked.”

Buzbee said not knowing what substance caused the problems hindered medical treatment for those who needed it.

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Refinery incidents

Recent emergency incidents at BP in Texas City

- March 19: Texas City orders people to take shelter after a propane leak attributed to a failed pump seal.
 - April 4: A storage tank fire is blamed on a lightning strike.
- April 10: A powdery cloud escapes the refinery, sending seven people to a hospital complaining of skin and eye irritation.
- April 19: At least 112 go to hospitals after exposure to unidentified fumes.

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