

# Lawsuit: 3M contamination led to more cancer, infertility

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Minnesota's attorney general alleges that chemicals dumped by 3M Co. in the Twin Cities metro led to an increase in cancer, infertility and babies with low birth weights.

The contamination caused \$5 billion in health and [environmental damage](#) for which 3M should be liable, Attorney General Lori Swanson said Friday in a [court filing](#).

The filing alleges that 3M knew the groundwater was contaminated years before it stopped making perfluorinated chemicals, known as PFCs, and that it withheld critical information from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"3M, in pursuit of profit, deliberately disregarded the substantial risk of injury to the people and environment of Minnesota from its continued manufacture of PFCs and its improper disposal," the state said.

The state cited a study by David Sunding, a natural resources economist at the University of California, Berkley, in court documents. Sunding studied epidemiological data and birth and death records for Washington County and Oakdale from 2001 and 2016. He found Oakdale had a 30 percent increase in low birth weights and premature births compared to neighboring communities. The city's fertility rate was about 16 percent lower.

The lawsuit is a "misguided attempt" to force the [company](#) to pay for a

problem that does not exist, 3M said.

"3M believes these chemicals present no harm at the levels they are observed in Minnesota," said William Brewer III, 3M's lead attorney.

The company began manufacturing PFCs in the 1940s and stopped production in 2002. The chemicals were used in fire-fighting foam, stain repellents, non-stick cookware and other household and industrial products. The company discarded the chemicals in landfills in Oakdale, Woodbury and Lake Elmo up until the 1970s.

Pollution was discovered in groundwater in several Washington County cities in 2004. The company has spent more than \$100 million to clean up the pollution by installing water filters in the Oakdale city water system, giving residents filters and distributing bottled water.

The lawsuit was first filed in 2010. After a series of procedural delays, the case is scheduled for trial early next year.

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