

ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL LISA MADIGAN

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release****Contact: Melissa Merz****312-814-3118****877-844-5461 (TTY)****[mmerz@atg.state.il.us](mailto:mmerz@atg.state.il.us)****August 18, 2005****MADIGAN, GLASGOW ANNOUNCE SETTLEMENT WITH EXXON MOBIL FOR ALLEGED AIR POLLUTION VIOLATIONS AT JOLIET REFINERY*****LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO RECEIVE \$110K***

Chicago –Attorney General Lisa Madigan and Will County State’s Attorney James Glasgow today announced that Will County environmental projects are slated to receive more than \$100,000 as part of a settlement agreement reached with ExxonMobil regarding alleged air pollution violations at the oil company’s refinery located southwest of Joliet, in Channahon Township.

ExxonMobil Oil Corporation, a New York corporation, has agreed to make payments totaling \$110,000 to the Village of Channahon, the Will County Emergency Management Agency, the Channahon Fire Protection District and the Troy Fire Protection District to pay for local environmental projects. In addition, ExxonMobil will pay \$150,000 to the Illinois Environmental Protection Trust Fund and \$21,846 to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) for costs incurred during the investigation and clean-up.

“I am pleased to see that the communities most seriously impacted by the releases from ExxonMobil’s Joliet refinery and the first-response teams that assisted during the emergencies will benefit from this settlement agreement,” Madigan said.

“I want to thank Lisa Madigan for her assistance with this most critical litigation. We will always vigorously enforce all environmental regulations to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of Will County,” Glasgow said.

The money paid to local government and law enforcement offices has been designated to fund the Wetlands and Waterway Restoration Project for the I&M Canal in Channahon, to purchase personal protective equipment for members of the Will County Emergency Management Agency’s Hazardous Materials Response Unit and to purchase airborne gas detection equipment for the Channahon and Troy Fire Protection Districts.

According to the lawsuit originally filed by the Illinois Attorney General's and Will County State's Attorney's offices against ExxonMobil in July 1999 and amended in 2003, two separate incidents at the refinery resulted in the release of dangerous contaminants into the air from the refinery's coker unit. Coking is a process that thermally converts and upgrades heavy residual fuel oils into lighter products and petroleum coke.

In July 1999, a mixture of gas oil and steam from the refinery's delayed coker unit was released into the air and covered everything in a one mile wide and six miles long area, including homes, vehicles, animals, vegetation and recreational areas, with a tar-like residue. Pressure relief valves that failed to open were blamed for the release of thousands of pounds of gas oil and steam into the air near the refinery. Prolonged contact with gas oil can result in skin and respiratory irritations and dizziness.

On the second occasion, in December 2002, thousands of pounds of hydrocarbons, hydrogen sulfide, benzene and sulfur dioxide were released into the air after pressure buildups occurred in the same coker unit. Operators did not act quickly enough to direct the excess pressure to the facility's flare system. According to the complaint, hydrogen sulfide is an extremely hazardous substance which, if breathed, can be fatal. Exposure to lower levels can result in eye irritation, shortness of breath and fluid in the lungs. Benzene is a known human carcinogen, and sulfur dioxide, when inhaled, can cause serious respiratory problems.

The consent decree is for settlement purposes and does not constitute an admission of liability by ExxonMobil.

Assistant Attorney General Rebecca Burlingham is handling the case for Madigan's Environmental Bureau.

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