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Benzene on the Scene: Litigation Targeting Products for Benzene on the Rise

Putative class actions targeting the consumer products, principally sunscreens and antiperspirants allegedly containing trace benzene, which was classified as a carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in 2017, first hit the scene in early 2021, and these cases have morphed, evolved, and spread in recent months to new states, new label claims, and new product categories.

Benzene is a colorless and highly flammable liquid with a sweet smell, like gasoline. It is a petrochemical often used as a precursor to manufacture other more complex chemicals as well as plastics, nylon, and other textiles. High levels of exposure to benzene are known to have carcinogenic effects, specifically on blood-related tissues in humans, and hence is linked to leukemia, a cancer of the blood. The FDA has set a conditional limit of 2 parts per million for consumer products.

According to data collected by Perkins Coie, there have been more than 75 benzene-related class actions filed as of December 31, 2021. The wave of litigation began in March and April of 2021 with three complaints against hand sanitizer companies, alleging that their products are not in fact "natural" and that they are adulterated because they contain dangerously high levels of benzene.

[Read the full article on *WestLaw Today**](#).

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