



News & Publications

Calif. Refinery Fire Sparks Legal Onslaught Against Chevron

8.10.12 | News
Law360.com

Robert Doty was quoted in an August 10, 2012 article by Law360 about thousands of claims filed following a fire at the Chevron Corp. refinery in Richmond, Calif. According to the article, employees were looking into a leak at the refinery when the fire broke out, injuring five workers and sending hundreds of area residents to the hospital.

While residents had already been making health-related claims, the article said that the environmental impact of the fire was still being evaluated.

Doty, an environmental litigator, told the publication that the company could have reporting obligations depending on the volume of regulated chemicals released as a result of the fire. But, he pointed out, it still remains to be seen whether anyone would file an environmental claim.

“The environment can’t show up in the courtroom and say, ‘I got damaged,’ rather someone would have to speak up on its behalf,” he said. “In order to do that, someone would need to invoke one of a relatively short list of legal theories, and it’s not clear whether there is an incentive to do that, unless there is a very significant amount of toxic material discharged into the atmosphere.”

According to Doty, if the fire did release a significant amount of toxic chemicals, “the likelihood of bodily injury or property damage claims goes up.

Related Professionals

Robert P. Doty

Related Practice Areas

Environmental



“The results of the investigations by the regulatory agencies and Chevron will be significant for figuring out if Chevron has a big problem on its hands or a relatively small problem on its hands,” he said.