

**April 21, 2022**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL ANNOUNCES CONSENT ORDERS THAT CONCLUDE PROLONGED LEGAL BATTLE OVER PILLSBURY MILLS SITE**

***Consent Orders Prohibit Defendants from Future Operations at Former Manufacturing Site***

**Chicago** — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced consent orders that bring to a conclusion litigation the Attorney General's office initiated against the previous owners and operators of the former Pillsbury Mills manufacturing facility in Springfield.

The Attorney General's office filed a lawsuit in 2015 alleging that the facility owner at that time, P. Mills LLC and contractor Midwest Demolition and Scrap Inc., along with P. Mills co-manager Joseph J. Chernis III, violated the Illinois Environmental Protection Act and federal regulations aimed at preventing asbestos pollution. The Attorney General's office subsequently added Joseph J. Chernis IV and Keith A. Crain as additional defendants. Upon filing the lawsuit, the Attorney General's office obtained an order requiring the defendants to immediately cease all demolition activities, post asbestos warning signs, secure all facility entrances and debris, and take steps to determine and report the extent of the asbestos contamination. However, the defendants' continued failures to comply resulted in multiple enforcement actions by the Attorney General's office. Attorney General Raoul's consent orders formally conclude the matter.

"This action brings to an end litigation that has spanned years and even predates my time as Attorney General. I hope this filing marks the start of a new chapter in which the facility again benefits the community," Raoul said. "These consent orders are one example of the work my office will continue to do to address environmental justice issues and pollution in vulnerable communities around Illinois."

The Attorney General's lawsuit was based on a referral by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency after inspectors found asbestos-containing material (ACM) stored in trash bags, open trash cans and boxes, as well as debris scattered around the facility.

"The actions of the defendants resulted in extensive environmental contamination on the Pillsbury Mills site that will require millions of dollars in remediation. These Consent Orders are a significant milestone for the site and will prevent any future involvement from the defendants," said Illinois EPA Director John J. Kim. "This property has a long history here in Springfield and still faces significant environmental challenges, but today's orders will allow the current property owners to proceed with plans for redevelopment."

The former Pillsbury Mills facility is an approximately 18-acre site consisting of more than two dozen structures, which is located in a residential area of Springfield, Illinois. [Raoul's consent orders](#), prohibit the defendants from conducting further operations of any kind at the facility. In addition, the defendants are required to cease and desist from any further violations of state environmental laws and regulations. Further, [Raoul's consent orders](#), requires payment of a \$30,000 civil penalty. The orders are part of Attorney General Raoul's work to address environmental justice issues throughout Illinois by enhancing enforcement actions in areas that are disproportionately impacted by pollution.

Violations by the defendants, including their failure to secure the facility and post proper warnings, required the Attorney General's office to take additional enforcement action. In 2017, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) undertook a nine-month, multimillion dollar cleanup at the facility. According to the USEPA, it removed nearly 2,200 tons of contaminated debris, 1,160 cubic yards of contaminated pipe wrap and boiler insulation, nine 275-gallon totes of waste and fuel oil, three 55-gallon drums of antifreeze,

3,700 fluorescent lightbulbs, and 12 pounds of mercury. In litigating the lawsuit, the Attorney General's office demanded that defendants divest themselves of the facility or face civil penalties reflecting the millions of taxpayer dollars spent remediating the asbestos violations. The facility was purchased for \$1 in March by Pillsbury Project LLC, which has said it plans to redevelop the site.

Proper ACM disposal includes wetting ACM during removal and ensuring the material remains wet until it is collected and contained, or treated prior to going to a disposal site. According to the USEPA, exposure to asbestos can lead to cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis. There is no known safe exposure level to asbestos.

The Attorney General's office enforces Illinois' environmental protection laws. Attorney General Raoul's Environmental Enforcement Division, which enforces civil environmental laws, has recovered millions of dollars from polluters and required companies to undertake environmental improvement projects in communities impacted by pollution. Raoul encourages residents to report environmental justice and other environmental concerns to his office by emailing [ej@ilag.gov](mailto:ej@ilag.gov).

Bureau Chief Andrew Armstrong and Assistant Attorney General Christina Nannini handled the case for Raoul's Environmental Bureau.