

Chicago families sue over soot from petcoke piles

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Four southeast Chicago families have filed a lawsuit against several companies, contending black dust from piles of "petcoke" -- a byproduct of the oil refinery process -- is consistently blowing into their homes.

The lawsuit was filed Thursday in Cook County Circuit Court by attorney Tom Zimmerman. He said the homeowners are seeking monetary damages, and they want the companies to cover the piles.

BP spokesman Scott Dean said the oil company contracts with George J. Beemsterboer, Inc. of Hammond, Ind. to transport petcoke from the oil company's refinery in Whiting, to the Chicago for storage. Petcoke is stored at terminals along the Calumet River.

BP isn't named in the lawsuit, but Beemsterboer and six other companies are. Dean said BP expects third party contractors to obey all local regulations.