

April 25, 2022

**ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL AND WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY HANLEY ANNOUNCE
ORDER IN CHEMICAL FACTORY FIRE LAWSUIT**

***Agreed Interim and Preliminary Injunction Order Will Ensure Cleanup Efforts Comply With
Environmental Laws***

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul and Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley today announced an agreed interim and preliminary injunction order in their lawsuit against Chemtool, Inc. (Chemtool). The order entered by the Winnebago County Circuit Court lays the framework for the cleanup from a massive fire and explosions that occurred at the manufacturing facility in Rockton, Illinois in June 2021.

[The court-enforceable order](#) contains several provisions that seek to require Chemtool to safely manage remaining contaminants, as well as bring the site into compliance with Illinois' environmental laws and regulations.

"The order will ensure the cleanup process occurs in accordance with the law and holds Chemtool responsible for investigating the full extent of the environmental damage that has been caused," Raoul said. "Given the volume of hazardous materials involved in the fire and the amount of debris, it is vital that cleanup and remediation is done in accordance with environmental laws for the health and safety of all Rockton-area residents."

Raoul's order addresses the most immediate environmental and health concerns by requiring Chemtool to present and gain approval of a plan to address, identify, store and properly dispose of all remaining chemical products. The order also requires weekly documentation of how waste materials generated by the fire are removed, as well as how daily inspections of the site are conducted. Chemtool must also prepare a schedule for demolition and decontamination of the site and a plan for the investigation of all on- and off-site impacts of the fire, including those to groundwater and private drinking water wells.

Under the order, Chemtool must reimburse Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Emergency Management Agency, and Winnebago County for their costs in responding to the six-alarm fire, which burned for several days, caused explosions and resulted in evacuations of area residents.

"As the cleanup and investigation of this fire continue, it is paramount that Chemtool is held responsible for the damage that has been caused," Hanley said. "I continue to be grateful for the work of the Illinois EPA and Attorney General Raoul to ensure this process continues to prioritize the protection of area residents and our environment."

"These Orders will serve as a detailed roadmap for the long road to recovery for the community of Rockton following the massive explosion that occurred more than ten months ago," Illinois EPA Director John J. Kim said. "The events of June 14, 2021 have had a lasting impact on area residents and officials and required hundreds of staff-hours for emergency responders and environmental officials. Our staff continues to monitor clean-up efforts at the site and we believe these orders are an important step to bringing closure to this devastating incident."

On the morning of June 14, a fire broke out and engulfed Chemtool's Rockton facility, causing several explosions and thick black smoke that could be observed many miles away from the facility. Health and safety concerns prompted evacuations of businesses and residents within a 1-mile radius of the facility, and residents within three miles of the facility were told to wear masks when outside. Several fire departments

in Illinois and Wisconsin responded to the fire, which burned for several days before the evacuation order was lifted on June 18.

[According to Raoul and Hanley's lawsuit](#), filed on July 9, 2021, the fire released ash, debris and other contaminants into the air, which landed on buildings, in residents' yards and throughout the area. Raoul and Hanley allege that firefighting foam used to suppress the fire was found in the Rock River after a pump failure, and that the debris, ash and runoff from the fire and firefighting efforts are waste that was not properly disposed of, which poses environmental hazards. The lawsuit also includes allegations of air and water pollution, creating a water pollution hazard and unauthorized waste disposal. Raoul and Hanley allege that Chemtool is liable for damages and for the costs the state and Winnebago County have incurred in responding to the incident.

Chemtool's Rockton plant manufactures grease, lubricating oil and fluids, and more than 4 million gallons of crude oil were stored at the facility. The facility is located near residences and the Rock River. Raoul and Hanley allege that the large volume of petroleum product stored in containers that have been compromised by the fire pose a significant threat to land and the Rock River.

Senior Assistant Attorney General Ellen O'Laughlin and Assistant Attorney General Kevin Garstka are handling the case for Raoul's Environmental Bureau. Civil Bureau Chief Lafakeria Vaughn is handling the case for the Winnebago County State's Attorney's office.