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**Communities for a Better Environment, East Oaklanders demand transition plan, accountability, compensation as polluting AB&I Foundry announces closure**  
*Majority Black & Latino community exposed to hexavalent chromium - lawsuit moving forward despite closure*

OAKLAND, Calif. – Following [AB&I Foundry's announced plans for a phased closure](#), [Communities for a Better Environment \(CBE\)](#) will continue organizing to demand a transition plan for the polluting facility and accountability for its impact on generations of East Oaklanders. [CBE will also continue its lawsuit against AB&I Foundry and its parent company, McWane, Inc.](#) for violating [Proposition 65 \(the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act\)](#) by exposing the surrounding community to a known carcinogen - hexavalent chromium - without proper notice. That lawsuit was filed in December of 2021 in Alameda County Superior Court. California's Attorney General followed up in February of 2022, also [suing McWane, Inc. for the foundry's toxic hexavalent chromium emissions and the related impacts on the community](#).

"This is the power of an active community! The people of East Oakland that came before and the people who continue to fight for clean air show what's possible when the community comes together to fight for what is just," **said East Oakland community member Jasmine Gonzalez.**

Leading up to its lawsuit, CBE and many East Oakland community leaders have organized for years to hold AB&I Foundry accountable through community based-participatory air monitoring, community education on odor reporting, direct action, and collaboration with local and state agencies.

“While the closure of AB&I Foundry will allow East Oakland to literally breathe a sigh of relief for the first time in over a century, it would be difficult to call this a win for environmental justice. AB&I is simply moving its toxic pollution and odors to another Black and brown community in Tyler, Texas. Rather than address the health risks of cancer and reproductive harm from hexavalent chromium pollution through a Risk Reduction Plan or provide any form of restitution to the East Oakland community tied to its polluting history, AB&I and McWane are instead trying to avoid any responsibility by running away,” **said CBE’s Northern California Program Director Ernesto Arevalo.** “AB&I and McWane Inc. need to be held accountable for the harm their pollution has caused residents. They must support a just transition of their workers and clean up the site so East Oakland can plan a cleaner, greener, and more just future.”

CBE wants AB&I to be held accountable for exposure of harmful emissions on generations of East Oakland families through a transition plan of their facility that will compensate affected families and institutions in the surrounding community, transfer the ownership of the land to community stewardship, cover the cost of clean-up of their facility, and support workers affected by the transitions, especially those living in East Oakland.

“I personally feel that it is another guilt tactic, like before. We have seen this before when AB&I was forcing the hand of the city to save the one hundred jobs from the operation they claimed was going to move to Tyler, Texas,” **said East Oakland community member and CBE’s Building the Good Organizer, Esther Goolsby.** I will believe it when I see it. They can’t just up and leave without consequences! They should clean up the land and give compensation to the community.”

"Whether they stay or go, CBE will still be pursuing civil penalties against AB&I and McWane Inc. for their exposure of the majority Black and Latinx community of East Oakland to dangerous hexavalent chromium without adequate warning," **said Tyler Earl, Staff Attorney for CBE.**

The East Oakland community’s increased risk of cancer due to hexavalent chromium and other toxic pollutants was [uncovered by a recent Bay Area Air Quality Management District \(BAAQMD\) Health Risk Assessment \(HRA\)](#), the first such assessment of AB&I Foundry. The foundry, which manufactures cast iron pipe and fittings for plumbing systems, was identified as having “twenty operations (sources) at this facility that emit one or more toxic air contaminants.” Cancer risk for workers was found to be four times what is considered the maximum acceptable level according to BAAQMD. Community members faced an increased cancer risk of two times higher than is deemed acceptable by BAAQMD. Due to these alarming findings, BAAQMD requires AB&I Foundry to submit and comply with a Risk Reduction Plan under [BAAQMD’s Regulation 11, Rule 18](#).

Passed in 1986, Proposition 65 directs businesses to warn Californians if they face significant exposure to chemicals in products or through business processes that cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm. In the decades since Prop 65 was

adopted, the State of California as well as private groups and citizens have sued for failure to provide notice of significant exposures and for water contamination.

The foundry is the largest industrial source of air pollution in Oakland, and it is located less than half a mile upwind of a public library and elementary schools. Hexavalent chromium exposure is being addressed in this lawsuit, but the potential impact to the community goes beyond this issue. [AB&I has long been a source of complaints by East Oakland residents](#) who report experiencing headaches, nausea and other concerning symptoms upon breathing in formaldehyde clouds and other noxious-smelling emissions from the foundry.

In response to community concerns, CBE has collaborated with parent leaders at local schools, including ACORN Woodland and EnCompass Academy, to collect air quality samples and particulate matter readings, leading to follow-up conversations and air monitoring with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). Through CBE's trainings, many community members learned about the odor reporting line from the air district, which many have used as a way to organize their neighbors and hold AB&I accountable for the smells impacting their neighborhoods. In 2019, CBE led an action outside of AB&I's Open House to hold the foundry accountable for its impact on the surrounding community and to demand a closure of the facility. CBE relentlessly encouraged regulatory agencies to investigate, which eventually led to findings of several pollutants and toxins emitted from the AB&I Foundry, including heavy metals, formaldehyde, benzene, and hexavalent chromium. Notably, CBE and BAAQMD co-hosted a workshop on AB&I's first facility-wide Health Risk Assessment, which was to lead to the creation of a risk reduction plan.

*Founded in 1978, **Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)** is one of the preeminent environmental justice organizations in the nation. The mission of CBE is to build people's power in California's communities of color and low-income communities to achieve environmental health and justice by preventing and reducing pollution and building green, healthy and sustainable communities and environments. CBE provides residents in heavily polluted urban communities in California with organizing skills, leadership training and legal, scientific and technical assistance, so that they can successfully confront threats to their health and well-being.*