

Leadership named for Sterigenics suits

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[Romanucci & Blandin](#) partner [Antonio M. Romanucci](#) will lead a group of plaintiffs' counsel who have filed at least 49 lawsuits against commercial sterilizing company [Sterigenics](#).

The leadership structure applies to discovery and pretrial matters. The company faces a wave of litigation alleging its Willowbrook facility emitted cancer-causing chemicals into the surrounding suburban community.

Cook County Circuit Judge [Christopher E. Lawler](#) announced the leadership setup in an order on Friday.

The co-lead counsel are [Shannon M. McNulty](#), partner at [Clifford Law Offices](#); [Todd A. Smith](#), co-founder of [Power Rogers & Smith LLP](#); [Patrick A. Salvi II](#), Chicago managing partner at [Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard P.C.](#); and [Steven A. Hart](#), partner at [Hart McLaughlin & Eldridge LLC](#).

Romanucci & Blandin attorney [Bryce T. Hensley](#) was named liaison counsel.

"I think this leadership team is the best one we could have put together to promote expeditious justice for the people in Willowbrook and the surrounding area and to ensure that this substance is not emitted anywhere near where people can breathe," Romanucci said in an interview.

Romanucci said coordinating discovery and pretrial matters is usual in this type of proceeding with many lawsuits filed in order to promote efficiency.

The various plaintiffs claim the facility's ethylene oxide emissions are responsible for serious medical conditions including breast cancer and lymphoma.

The gas is used for its sterilization properties, often on medical instruments that can't handle high-temperature sanitizing methods.

One plaintiff alleges she had nine miscarriages while she lived near Sterigenics for 16 years.

Dozens of lawsuits followed an August 2018 report from the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)' Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry which found that "an elevated cancer risk exists for residents and offsite workers in the Willowbrook community surrounding the Sterigenics facility," and that "[t]hese elevated risks present a public health hazard to these populations."

Then-Illinois Attorney General [Lisa M. Madigan](#) sued on behalf of the state roughly two months later, on Oct. 30, 2018.

This July, Illinois Attorney General [Kwame Y. Raoul](#)'s office resolved the litigation in [DuPage County Circuit Court](#) through a consent decree with Sterigenics and the [DuPage County State's Attorney's Office](#).

The company issued a statement on Sept. 30 announcing plans to shut down the Willowbrook plant.

"Unfortunately, inaccurate and unfounded claims regarding Sterigenics and the unstable legislative and regulatory landscape in Illinois have created an environment in which it is not prudent to maintain these critical sterilization operations in Willowbrook," the company wrote.

Romanucci said the company's departure won't impact the litigation.

"If anything, it does validate our position from the beginning that ethylene oxide is a highly dangerous carcinogen matter which should not be in the air that people are breathing," he said.

He expects a number of new complaints will be filed soon.

"How many, I cannot say at this point. But expect a greater number to be made shortly," he said.

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