ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Firm To Pay Medical Bills In Toxic Leak

Monsanto Co. will pay the medical expenses of people who went to emergency rooms Sunday complaining of ill effects from the release of toxic gas from the Sauget plant.

But a company spokeswoman said in a statement Wednesday: "Based on our extensive investigation of the phosphorus trichloride release ... and reports from the local hospitals, we've concluded that a vast majority of those who sought treatment were unaffected by the release."

Diane Bartolanzo, a spokeswoman for Monsanto, said the company would pay $39,950 in medical expenses for the 238 people who visited emergency rooms after the release, complaining of ill effects.

Earlier this week, East St. Louis Mayor Carl R. Officer said the release had been too short-lived to cause so many people to become ill. City officials had said 254 people reported to emergency rooms.

The chemical leak occurred at 7:35 a.m. Sunday at the W.G. Krummrich plant at Sauget and lasted for about five minutes. Monsanto representatives said 48 pounds of the chemical had escaped through a pressure seal.

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