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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2021

AG Kaul Announces Judgment Requiring \$95,000 Penalty for Alleged Illegal Release of Mercury Waste

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul announces today that his office has obtained a civil judgment against Veolia ES Technical Solutions, L.L.C. (Veolia) requiring it to pay a \$95,000 monetary penalty for alleged violations of the state’s air management and hazardous waste laws that occurred at Veolia’s Ozaukee County facility where it recovers mercury from mercury-containing wastes in retort ovens.

“For our health and for the environment, we must protect clean air,” said AG Kaul. “It’s crucial that facilities handling mercury or other hazardous substances ensure that unlawful pollution doesn’t happen.”

According to the complaint, on July 4, 2017 Veolia was heating mercury-containing waste in one of its retort oven kettles when the vacuum line connected to the kettle became plugged and cracked. Veolia discovered that mercury was being released from the oven during indoor air monitoring at the facility on July 5, 2017. From about 11:00 a.m. on July 4, 2017 to 6:00 a.m. on July 5, 2017, Veolia emitted uncontrolled emissions of mercury—totaling about 4.52 pounds of mercury—from the facility, which caused an exceedance of the ambient air quality standard for mercury.

Mercury is a persistent, bio-accumulative toxic pollutant that poses a significant risk to human health and the environment. Human health effects associated with mercury include sever neurological disorders in infants and children and kidney damage.

After the July 4-5, 2017 incident Veolia voluntarily shut down all its retort ovens and made several upgrades to the ovens. These upgrades included vacuum piping upgrades, a more robust vacuum line monitoring system, and improved air emission control equipment. These upgrades and improvements cost Veolia about \$880,000.

Assistant Attorney General Bradley J. Motl represented the State. The Order for Judgment was signed by Ozaukee County Circuit Court Judge Paul V. Malloy on June 22, 2021.

Because this compromise was reached prior to the commencement of a civil action, requirements of 2017 Wisconsin Act 369 do not apply.