

California sues ExxonMobil for misleading consumers on plastic recycling



San Francisco, September 26 (RHC)-- The U.S. state of California has filed a lawsuit against oil and gas giant ExxonMobil, accusing the company of conducting a “decades-long campaign of deception” regarding plastic recycling.

The state’s Department of Justice claimed ExxonMobil had been deceiving Californians for half a century through misleading public statements and marketing campaigns. These efforts allegedly promised that recycling would solve the increasing plastic waste issue produced by the company, according to a press release from California Attorney General Rob Bonta’s office.

The suit, filed in San Francisco County Superior Court, accuses ExxonMobil of being the largest producer of polymers used in single-use plastic that becomes plastic waste in California. It seeks to compel the company to end its deceptive practices that threaten the environment and the public.

Additionally, Bonta is seeking an abatement fund, disgorgement, and civil penalties for the harm caused by plastics pollution to California’s communities and environment.

“Plastics are everywhere, from the deepest parts of our oceans, the highest peaks on earth, and even in our bodies, causing irreversible damage — in ways known and unknown — to our environment and potentially our health,” said Bonta.

“For decades, ExxonMobil has been deceiving the public to convince us that plastic recycling could solve the plastic waste and pollution crisis when they clearly knew this wasn’t possible. ExxonMobil lied to further its record-breaking profits at the expense of our planet and possibly jeopardizing our health,” he continued.

The attorney general’s office said that most plastic products cannot be recycled, either technically or economically, but the alleged deception purportedly led consumers to purchase more single-use plastics than they would have otherwise.

The lawsuit also criticizes ExxonMobil’s recent “advanced recycling” program as a public relations tactic to encourage continued use of single-use plastics. The reality, according to the lawsuit, was that most discarded plastic ends up in landfills, incinerated, or dumped into the environment.

Since 1985, over 11.8 million kilograms of trash have been collected from California’s beaches and waterways, with approximately 81 percent being plastic. The attorney general’s office claimed that most plastic items found during annual cleanups can be traced back to ExxonMobil’s polymer resins.

Monday’s lawsuit is the result of a two-year investigation by the California Department of Justice into the role of fossil fuel and petrochemical companies in the global plastics waste crisis. It is the first in the United States to hold a fossil fuel company accountable for its messaging around plastic recycling.

Last year, California sued several major oil companies, including Exxon, for their alleged role in the damage caused by climate change-induced storms and wildfires. Other states also have taken legal action against oil and gas companies for their role in climate change and air pollution.

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