

For decades, Garlock manufactured a range of asbestos containing products, including gaskets and compression packing. Over the years, many people have been diagnosed with malignant mesothelioma and other asbestos-related cancers and diseases as a result of exposure to Garlock asbestos gaskets. Garlock has therefore been named in lawsuits by a number of those victims.

Garlock is a North Carolina limited liability company. Garlock's parent company is EnPro Industries, a North Carolina corporation headquartered in Charlotte. On June 5, 2010, EnPro put Garlock into Chapter 11 bankruptcy. This means that Garlock cannot be sued any more for any diseases caused by its asbestos products, as it now has bankruptcy protection.

Even though EnPro Industries did not itself file for bankruptcy protection, it has requested and the bankruptcy court has agreed to halt any lawsuits against EnPro for diseases caused by its subsidiary Garlock's products.

Garlock for many years took the position that its gaskets would typically not release dangerous levels of asbestos during routine and intended usage. However, a number of years ago, studies were performed establishing that when pipefitters removed gaskets under normal working conditions, the amount of asbestos fibers released into the breathing environment far exceeded safe levels. It was also established that despite Garlock's earlier claims, even the workers who were not removing the gaskets but were merely performing other job duties in the vicinity of the pipefitters were also inhaling hazardous amounts of asbestos into their lungs, greatly increasing their risk of later developing mesothelioma and other forms of cancer.

Evidence has also shown that Garlock used to include crocidolite in gaskets it manufactured and marketed as chrysotile containing gaskets. All forms of asbestos cause mesothelioma and other cancers, but it is believed that crocidolite is the most potent carcinogen of all the asbestos types. So it is significant that Garlock was including crocidolite in gaskets and not informing its customers or the public of that fact.

Typically, under section 524(g) of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code, when an asbestos company files for Chapter 11 protection, it must create an administrative trust to provide some amount of compensation to victims of its asbestos products. It usually takes years before a 524(g) trust is established, so in the meantime asbestos victims are powerless to pursue any claims against Garlock.

