

0. MISLEADING STATEMENTS - Story Preface

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3. MISLEADING STATEMENTS

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PG&E distributed flyers discussing the company's use of "chromium" to local residents. Nowhere in the flyer was there any mention of the type of chromium PG&E had used. In fact, one could make a strong case that carefully selected words were deliberately misleading:

Chromium occurs in two forms. The form that is present in groundwater can cause health effects in high doses. The cleanup program, however, will result in chromium levels that meet the very conservative drinking water standards set by the EPA. In addition, the form of chromium that will be left on soils after irrigation is nontoxic. In fact, chromium in this form is a naturally occurring metal that is an essential ingredient in the human diet, one that is often included in multiple vitamin/mineral supplements.

Reading these words, one could reasonably think PG&E's hexavalent chromium was almost beneficial. As the plaintiffs' trial brief wryly commented, the flyer might have invited a person to "sprinkle some on your morning cereal."

Failure to properly identify the dangerous type of "chromium" it had dumped into the environment wasn't PG&E's only omission. The flyer made it sound like detection of contamination at the compressor station was a new development. It wasn't. PG&E first knew about plant contamination by at least 1965.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MISLEADING-STATEMENTS-Brockovich-Erin>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MISLEADING-STATEMENTS-Brockovich-Erin>