

State Says ConocoPhillips Falsified \$25M in Claims

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Petroleum giant ConocoPhillips filed \$25 million in false insurance claims over 14 years for cleanup of leaky underground storage tanks, a state lawsuit charged.

The lawsuit filed Monday in 3rd District Court accused the Houston-based multinational company of double-dipping on 1,500 claims from 1995 to 2009 even though it had its own private insurance to cover cleanup costs, the Deseret News (<http://bit.ly/Nw3Udj> [1]) reported Wednesday.

The state is seeking reimbursement and punitive damages.

Utah established a fund in 1989 to help owners and operators of gas stations cover costs of petroleum releases. Gas station operators paid the first \$10,000 of cleanup costs and the fund paid the remainder, up to \$2 million, state officials said.

Each time a claim was submitted, the company had to check a box on the paperwork indicating whether it lacked the type of insurance to cover such a spill.

The lawsuit charges the company reached settlement agreements on claims for more than \$268 million while never disclosing to Utah officials it had insurance and made those settlements.

Utah Assistant Attorney General Paul McConkie said the company allowed the Petroleum Storage Tank Fund to reimburse it for \$25 million at the same time it received reimbursement from many insurers on the same leak.

"ConocoPhillips secretly double-dipped ... and was unjustly enriched," the suit said.

A ConocoPhillips spokeswoman said the company does not comment on legal issues.

Information from: Deseret News, <http://www.deseretnews.com> [2]

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