

News Release  
August 3, 2018



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## Harris County District Attorney

**KIM OGG**

### **Arkema indicted for toxic cloud**

A grand jury today indicted Arkema North America, a French-made major chemical manufacturer, along with its CEO and a plant manager, prosecutors announced.

The grand jury concluded they were responsible for the release of a toxic cloud over the Crosby community during Hurricane Harvey, prosecutors announced.

Arkema North America, its CEO Richard Rowe, and plant manager Leslie Comardelle, are named in the indictment.

“Companies don’t make decisions, people do,” Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg said. “Responsibility for pursuing profit over the health of innocent people rests with the leadership of Arkema.”

“Indictments against corporations are rare,” Ogg said. “Those who poison our environment will be prosecuted when the evidence justifies it.”

The indictment charges they all had a role in “recklessly” releasing chemicals into the air, placing residents and first responders at risk of serious bodily injury.

The charge carries penalties of up to five years in prison for the persons and up to a \$1 million fine for the corporation.

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board released a report earlier this year on the fire at Arkema's Crosby plant.

Chemicals had to be kept frozen to avoid bursting into flames, but temperatures rose after floodwaters knocked out the plant's power. As a result, the chemicals exploded, causing a fire that burned for day and releasing the cloud.

Prosecutors allege the disaster could and should have been prevented.

Arkema's plant is located at 18000 Crosby Gate Road.

The Harris County Sheriff's Office, the Houston Police Department's Environmental Investigations Unit, and the Harris County District Attorney's Office Environmental Crimes Division contributed to the investigation.

"As the hurricane approached, Arkema was more concerned about production and profit than people," said Alexander Forrest, chief of the Environmental Crimes Division at the Harris County District Attorney's Office.

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