

# Environmental and societal issues in erin brockovich movie

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The case of Erin Brockovich took place in Hinkley, California from 1993 to 1996 against the Pacific Gas & Electric Co (PG&E). The case concerned that PG&E was using an anti-corrosive chemical called chromium 6 between 1952 and 1966. So customer advocate and environmental lobbyist, Erin Brockovich, started to look into PG&E and found out about the 370 million gallons of Hexavalent chromium (Chromium 6) they were adding to Hinkley's water and how dangerous it is to the human body.

Brockovich at first was a divorced mother who got into a car accident that required her to get neck surgery. After that, she moved to Los Angeles's San Fernando Valley, and then she filed a lawsuit against the guy who crashed into her car with the law firm Masry & Vititoe to represent her. She got hardly any money from her lawsuit and couldn't support her four kids. An attorney named Ed Masry offered her a job as a clerk at Masry & Vititoe. That's when Brockovich noticed that in the documents she was filing there were papers from PG&E that included blood samples. She got permission from Ed to look into PG&E and she found out that the gas, chromium 6, was used to prevent rust from corroding its water-cooling system. And that the chemical runoff was dumped in wastewater ponds, located in the Mojave Desert, which eventually got into the residents' groundwater which is used for drinking, swimming, and more. Additionally, when human bodies are exposed to Chromium 6 medical issues occur. These medical issues are lung disease, oral ulcers, leukocytosis, stomach torment, the runs, skin aggravation or ulceration, unfavorably susceptible contact dermatitis, word related asthma, nasal bothering and ulceration, punctured nasal septa, rhinitis, nosebleeds, respiratory disturbance, nasal malignant growth, sinus malignancy, eye

bothering and harm, punctured eardrums, kidney harm, liver harm, pneumonic clog and edema, epigastric torment, and disintegration and staining teeth. In conclusion, after Erin Brochovich had all of her evidence needed she filed a lawsuit against PG&E with the help of Masry & Vititoe, and the residents of Hinkley in total got awarded about \$333 Million.

In the movie "Erin Brockovich" there are many key points that were either represented incorrectly or not represented at all in the movie. One of the points is that in the movie there was a trial but that is not what happened. The case against PG&E never went to trial because PG&E and the plaintiffs agreed to a private arbitration that contained a panel of judges that could be hired. Moreover, PG&E agreed to private arbitration which favors only people who can afford it and opens conflict related to interests and opinions. This case was not only about the contamination of water but on the rise of private arbitration. Another point is that PG&E talked to the plaintiff's attorneys before the trial which shouldn't be allowed since it can create interests and associates with the opposing side. Another main point is that in the movie they didn't show that many of the citizens sued because their awards were smaller than they were entitled to. The residents agreed with their lawyers that the lawyers would get 40% of the settlement but then without being asked the clients were charged an extra 10 million dollars for costs. Also, another point is that the Lawyers held the award money for about six months before it was distributed to the town. Another point is that the citizens complained that the different amounts of money that each plaintiff got were not logical and that the arbitrators never looked at each of the citizens'

medical records. This concludes that there are many points in the movie that were false or never included in the movie.

Societal and environmental impacts, that the actual case was, introduced more attention to water contamination. Furthermore, Erin Brockovich and other studies have shown that the Kicky case was not an isolated event and that 200 million Americans all across the 50 states are exposed to chromium 6 which is at unsafe levels. This brought attention to media and people started to worry about their water. Also, industries have reported that they have been adding chromium into the environment. For instance, in 2009 an electric power industry just said that they have released 10.6 pounds of chromium into the environment. Also many studies have been conducted to show that ingesting even a tiny amount of chromium 6 can cause cancer and other medical issues. Also, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was required by environmental activists to add chromium-6 to the rundown of synthetic substances for which nearby utilities must test under the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule. The rule also requires the EPA to create a new list of substances every five years that must be watched by public water systems. Therefore, people have been looking into chromium 6 more often now that the Erin Brockovich case was introduced.