

Robert Bilott, Famed PFAS Attorney, to be Keynote Speaker at ATMO America

Bilott was the first to expose the prevalence and harmful health effects of PFAS, which is now a concern in the cooling and heating industry.

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, April 9, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Robert Bilott](#), a prominent U.S. environmental attorney whose lawsuits against the chemical industry exposed for the first time the prevalence and harmful health effects of the environmental pollutant known as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), will be the keynote speaker at the ATMOsphere (ATMO) America Summit 2024 on natural refrigerant-based HVAC&R.



The conference will be held Monday, June 10, and Tuesday, June 11, in Washington, D.C. Bilott's keynote is scheduled for 9:15 am on June 10. ATMOsphere, a Brussels-based global market accelerator for natural refrigerants, is the organizer of the conference and publisher of NaturalRefrigerants.com.

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There was growing awareness that the entire class of PFAS chemicals might be a problem, including the newer replacements (like GenX) that were being billed as less persistent than PFOA and PFOS.”

Robert Bilott, U.S. Environmental Attorney

Bilott's keynote – “How Robert Bilott exposed the global threat of PFAS: lessons for the cooling and heating industry” – will be followed by a PFAS panel discussion including Richie Kaur, Non-CO2 Climate Pollution Reduction Advocate, Climate & Energy, for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC); Mindi Messmer, Senior Research Scientist for MedStar Health and former New Hampshire State House Representative; and a representative of ATMOsphere.

Known as “forever chemicals” for their persistence in nature, PFAS encompass nearly 15,000

synthetic fluorinated chemicals that have been used in a variety of applications, such as non-stick cookware and packaging, stain-resistant clothing and carpets, and firefighting foam. According to a widely accepted definition developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), shorter-chain PFAS include common HFO and HFC gases, some of which degrade into another PFAS, trifluoroacetic acid (TFA), in the atmosphere.

Thanks to Bilott's work, which was the basis for the critically acclaimed 2019 film *Dark Waters*, PFAS such as PFOA and PFOS have been linked to several health impacts, including cancer, diminished immunity, changes in liver function and reproductive toxicity. The health effects of shorter-chain PFAS are still being studied, but the German government plans an EU proposal linking reproductive toxicity to TFA, which has been found in [blood serum](#). Bilott's pathbreaking efforts to hold the chemical industry accountable for PFAS pollution can be seen as a guide for future legal and regulatory efforts aimed at f-gases and TFA.

This 13th annual edition of ATMO America will gather key industry experts, including manufacturers, policymakers, end users and contractors, to learn about the latest developments in natural refrigerant-based HVAC&R systems, including those using CO₂, hydrocarbons (such as propane/R290 and isobutane/R600a) and ammonia (R717), as well as regulatory issues such as PFAS.

You can now register for the event [here](#) and find the preliminary program and other information on the event website. End users can register for free, and contractors/installers of HVAC&R systems are eligible to receive one free ticket per organization, with a 50% discount on additional tickets.

"DuPont's Worst Nightmare"

To date, Bilott – a partner at Cincinnati, Ohio-based Taft Stettinius & Hollister – has helped secure over \$1 billion in benefits for his clients adversely impacted by PFAS contamination, through the first U.S. class action, personal injury, medical monitoring, multi-district litigations, and jury trials involving PFAS. He has been selected as one of the best lawyers in the U.S. for several years running and in 2017 received the Right Livelihood Award, commonly known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize." He is also a Lecturer at the Yale School of Public Health.

His work on PFAS has received global attention through a New York Times Magazine cover story called "The Lawyer Who Became DuPont's Worst Nightmare," as well as his own book, *Exposure: Poisoned Water, Corporate Greed, and One Lawyer's Twenty-Year Battle Against Dupont*, which inspired *Dark Waters*, featuring Academy-Award nominee Mark Ruffalo as Bilott. Bilott also contributed to the 2019 documentary *The Devil We Know* and to *Revealed: How to Poison a Planet*, which will be released on April 28.

Bilott is frequently invited to provide keynote lectures and talks at law schools, universities, colleges, communities and other organizations all over the world, including testimony before

federal and state congressional subcommittees, parliaments of the European Union, individual member states and the United Kingdom and committees of the United Nations.

Bilott's journey battling PFAS began in 1998 when he was approached by West Virginia farmer Wilbur Earl Tennant, who was convinced that a creek on his property had been poisoned by runoff from a nearby DuPont landfill, causing the death of many of his cattle. That landfill proved to be a dumping site for PFOA.

In his book, *Exposure*, Bilott writes about the ongoing questions about other PFAS chemicals: "Their structural similarity and some evidence from animal studies suggested they could be toxic or carcinogenic but we were hearing the same familiar argument that nobody had done the extensive science required to reach a firm and actionable conclusion on the human impact of these additional PFAS chemicals."

Europe is taking the threat posed by fluorinated gases and TFA seriously, and is currently deciding how to regulate them as PFAS. However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and some U.S. states have decided to use a definition of PFAS that excludes ultrashort-chain PFAS like f-gases and TFA, making it harder for them to be regulated. In response, more than 150 scientists recently signed a statement supporting a PFAS definition (such as OECD's [that would include f-gases and TFA](#)).

Case studies on natural refrigerants

In addition to Bilott's keynote and the PFAS panel, ATMOsphere will feature a wide range of refrigeration and heat pump case studies involving the use of CO₂ as the refrigerant as well as case studies on applications using hydrocarbons and ammonia. The program will also offer end users' experiences with natural refrigerants; policy and standards updates, including the latest from the U.S. EPA; state funding for natural refrigerants; and market and technology trends.

The Platinum sponsor of ATMO America 2024 is Hillphoenix. Gold sponsors are Hussmann, Kysor Warren, Copeland, M&M Carnot and Frick.

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