

# Oregon officials work their options after J.H. Baxter evades hearing, skips paying fines

KLCC | By **Brian Bull**

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The shuttered J.H. Baxter wood treatment facility off of Eugene's Roosevelt Blvd, Nov. 6, 2022.

After agreeing to pay environmental penalties from its wood treatment operations, the J.H. Baxter Company has apparently not paid those fines.

The J.H. Baxter Company initially faced fines of \$305,440 back in May, with a contested case hearing scheduled with groups including the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

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That hearing was canceled when Baxter formally agreed to pay. However, Lisa Arkin of Beyond Toxics, says that's not happened.

"They avoided the August hearing by saying they would pay the fine, and then they walked away and didn't pay a penny."

DEQ spokesman Dylan Darling told KLCC that payment was due in July. Now with interest, J.H. Baxter's total penalties as of Monday was \$314,176.00.

"We have filed liens on Baxter's property in Oregon and Washington, so they couldn't sell or transfer the property without taking care of that debt," said Darling.

Darling adds DEQ is working with the Oregon Department of Justice and the Oregon Department of Revenue on getting J.H. Baxter to pay up.

Meanwhile, soil testing has been going on at surrounding residences in the Bethel neighborhood that the J.H. Baxter facility operated for 80 years, before shuttering in January. Locals worry about the extent of dioxin contamination that could be in their yards and gardens.

Requests for comment from the wood treatment company were not returned.

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## Brian Bull

Brian Bull joined the KLCC News Team in June 2016. In his 25+ years as a public media journalist, he's worked at NPR, Twin Cities Public Television, South Dakota Public Broadcasting, Wisconsin Public Radio, and ideastream in Cleveland. His reporting has netted dozens of accolades, including four national Edward R. Murrow Awards (19 regional), the Ohio Associated Press' Best Reporter Award, Best Radio Reporter from the Native American Journalists Association, and the

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