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Deadline Approaches In Lawsuit Against Pittsburgh-Area Health Care Providers

Class-Action Suit Claims Hospitals Failed To Properly Pay Employees

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PITTSBURGH -- The law firm handling a class-action lawsuit against University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and two other regional health systems held a news conference Thursday to remind eligible participants that time is running out to sign up.

The suit potentially covers nearly 100,000 former and current employees at UPMC, Pittsburgh Mercy Hospital and West Penn Allegheny Health System who are owed wages for allegedly being made to work through lunch hours and meal breaks.



UPMC (the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center)

The class-action suit claims that the hospital system failed to pay workers for all of the hours they worked, automatically taking money from the employees' paychecks -- even though the employees worked during their entire shift.

Eligible employees will receive a notice in the mail explaining their options and how to make a claim.

"Checks go out and people call and are very upset because three or four of their coworkers are collecting all of this money, and they didn't receive anything. And they're upset because they didn't fill in the paperwork. And we want to do everything we can on the front end to make sure if they want to get a recovery, now is the time to participate.

You can't be griping about it later on," said Nelson Thomas, one of the attorneys handling the case.

According to a news release from the law firm, in order to make a claim, employees need to fill out and return a form to the attorneys representing the employees. The court has ordered that the employees must return the forms within 60 days.

Employees are being directed to www.hospitalvertime.com for more information about participating in the lawsuit.

UPMC said it will vigorously defend itself against the claim, which the health system said is "false and without merit."

According to UPMC spokesman Paul Wood, UPMC's policies state employees who work through their meal break

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are required to cancel the lunch deduction in the timekeeping system.

Wood said in a news release that UPMC "regularly and routinely" pays employees working through a meal break and employees who follow the guidelines are "fully and completely compensated."

The health system said that New York-based Thomas and Solomon, the law firm handling the lawsuit, solicits these types of claims by direct mail and has sued other hospital systems.

The attorneys involved said maximum claims could reach as high as \$29,000.

UPMC said in a news release that similar past cases handled by the same attorneys have yielded as little as \$250 after legal fees for affected employees, Mayo reported.

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