

Lawsuits Charge Philadelphia-Area Hospitals for Not Paying for Work in Breaks

by Leigh Page, November 24, 2009

Seven Philadelphia-area healthcare systems are being sued for allegedly not compensating nurses and other employees for work during unpaid meal breaks, according to a report by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

The lawsuits were filed by the law firm of Thomas and Solomon, a Rochester, N.Y., firm which has filed similar actions against hospitals in Pittsburgh, Boston, Syracuse, Buffalo and Rochester.

The firm stated that the hospitals' computerized payroll systems automatically deduct an unpaid half-hour lunch break, even when the employee is still at work, which would be in violation of federal and state law.

The lawsuits, seeking class-action status, are against the University of Pennsylvania Health System, Jefferson Health System, Temple University Health System, Mercy Health System, Albert Einstein Healthcare Network, Abington Memorial Hospital and Aria Health System (formerly Frankford Healthcare System).

An official at the University of Pennsylvania Health System said legal staff had not seen the suits and the other hospitals could not be reached for comment.

The executive director of the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals said working through unpaid lunch breaks has become part of the hospital culture and employees are reluctant to protest it.