

Pay suit against hospitals seeks plaintiffs

Friday, July 10, 2009

By Steve Twedt, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

About 100,000 current and former hourly employees of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, the West Penn Allegheny Health System and the former Mercy Hospital soon will receive notices asking if they want to join a lawsuit alleging the hospitals forced them to work during meal breaks.

Attorney J. Nelson Thomas of Thomas & Solomon LLP of Rochester, N.Y., said about 1,000 workers had signed on to the federal suit, which has been conditionally certified as a collective, or class, action. The notices will be sent to workers employed by the hospitals in only the past three years, due to the applicable statute of limitations.

The suit alleges the hospitals did not compensate workers for interrupted lunches, training sessions and work performed before and after their shifts, a charge the hospitals deny.

UPMC spokesman Paul Wood said yesterday that if employees work through a meal break, "they are required to cancel the lunch deduction in our timekeeping system for which they are then paid. UPMC regularly and routinely pays our employees working through a meal break, and employees following our guidelines were fully and completely compensated."

The notices will be mailed to UPMC employees today, while WPAHS and pre-UPMC merger Mercy employees will be notified in August. Mr. Thomas said those who think they may be eligible to join the suit but don't receive a letter may go to www.hospitalovertime.com or call 1-877-272-4066 for more information.

First published on July 10, 2009 at 12:00 am