



## Hospital lawsuits could impact thousands

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A New York law firm today announced it filed lawsuits against UPMC and West Penn Allegheny Health System that could impact more than 100,000 current and former hospital workers if a judge grants them class-action status.

Three lawsuits filed in U.S. District Court, Downtown, accuse the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, West Penn Allegheny and Pittsburgh Mercy Health System of cheating workers out of pay by automatically deducting a half-hour for meals, regardless of whether such a break was taken, not paying for work performed before and after scheduled shifts and not paying for required training.

Nearly 700 current or former UPMC and West Penn employees already have signed up to join the lawsuits, said Nelson Thomas, a Rochester, N.Y. lawyer who filed the lawsuits.

"They've cheated employees out of millions of dollars in pay over the past several decades," Thomas said today at the Omni William Penn, Downtown, during a news conference to announce the lawsuits.

UPMC spokesman Paul Wood denied the claims.

"We're aware of the lawsuits, we're examining them, and we are going to vigorously defend ourselves," Wood said.

Wood said UPMC stands by its pay policies.

On Tuesday, Thomas' firm filed a lawsuit on behalf of two former Mercy Hospital nurses claiming they are owed back pay. Defendants named in that case are Pittsburgh Mercy Health System; Mercy Hospital; St. Pius X Residence; former Mercy CEO Kenneth Eshak; and Kristen Bell, Mercy's vice president of human resources.

UPMC acquired Mercy in January 2008. The Uptown hospital is now known as UPMC Mercy.

Today, the firm filed a federal lawsuit against UPMC and its 104 healthcare facilities.

A federal lawsuit also was filed today against West Penn Allegheny and its 56 health care facilities.

\*Prior results are not a guarantee of future results.

Thomas' law firm — Dolan, Thomas & Solomon — settled a similar case against the University of Rochester in 2006 for \$9 million. That figure included legal fees and up to \$700 for qualified employees, or \$100 for each year they worked during a seven-year period. In the end, approximately 26,000 employees received part of the settlement.

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