

Rocky Mountain News

To print this page, select **File** then **Print** from your browser

URL: http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/local/article/0,1299,DRMN_15_2082314,00.html

Suit: Mold, fungi at DIA

Denver, Chicago law firms cite health risks

By **Todd Hartman, Rocky Mountain News**

July 2, 2003

Denver International Airport has exposed employees and thousands of travelers to mold and fungi contamination and must take immediate steps to alleviate the problem, according to a class-action lawsuit filed Tuesday.

The suit, filed by law firms in Chicago and Denver on behalf of two United Airlines employees, cites poor environmental conditions at DIA, including the presence of extensive mold and fungi and raw sewage leaks and associated gases.

Plaintiffs Terri Crandall and JoAnn Hubbard have developed "various recurring respiratory difficulties and other ailments that are consistent with toxic exposure" at the airport, the lawsuit charges.

Among 18 specific problems cited in the complaint:

- "Massive amounts" of mold in a men's locker room on Concourse B. One test revealed more than one million "colony forming units" in a 2-inch area. Experts say numbers in the low thousands are generally a cause for concern.
- Mold contamination covering an entire wall in Concourse B - an area of growth at least 20 feet high by 80 feet long. Another area of contamination made a training room "unusable."
- Pools of leaking raw sewage in tunnels under Concourse B up to 6 inches deep and stretching 10 feet long by 4 feet wide.
- Sewer gases that emanated through the east and west Red Carpet rooms, special service rooms and elevator shafts on Concourse B.
- Other miscellaneous problems in Concourse B, including an unknown bluish colored sediment oozing through the tarmac near gates B38 and B42.

"As a result of environmental conditions, the airport presents a health hazard to all who pass through its doors," the lawsuit says. "Nonetheless, despite having known of these air quality problems, Denver has failed to take adequate remedial action and, as a result, recklessly and carelessly exposed tens of thousands of unwitting victims to these conditions."

DIA spokesman Steve Snyder, reached after 5 p.m. Tuesday, said he was unaware of the lawsuit and that no one was available to respond to the allegations. He said the airport might provide comment today.

One of the firms filing the suit, Childress & Zdeb, Ltd., specializes in mold litigation, having represented plaintiffs in more than 400 cases in 37 states, according to a statement from the firm.

Advertisement

● Gas
 ● Wood
 ● Pellet
 ● Electric
**Stoves &
 Fireplaces**
**All HEAT-N-GLO
 Fireplaces**
**20%
 OFF**
 Click here
 HEAT-N-GLO
No one builds a better fire


 spa-brokers.com

"The attorneys (at the firm) have helped recover \$50 million in mold-related lawsuits for property damages and injury caused by mold," the firm said.

Most common molds are generally not hazardous to health, though they can be irritating to people with asthma, hay fever or other allergies. But some types - including at least one cited in the DIA lawsuit - are believed to be potentially more dangerous, with effects that include damage to the immune system.

The lawsuit seeks several conditions for both plaintiffs "and thousands of others."

Demands include a one-time health check-up, the creation of a court-supervised fund to provide ongoing medical surveillance, steps by Denver to deal with the problem - including closure of some of the airport if needed - and unspecified damages.

The lawsuit isn't DIA's first encounter with mold. A mile-long utility tunnel had to be closed during construction of the airport in 1993 after workers complained of respiratory troubles after a mold and fungi infestation on tunnel walls.

hartmant@RockyMountainNews.com or (303) 892-5048

Copyright 2003, Rocky Mountain News. All Rights Reserved.