

Suit claims unpaid time at work

Security checks spawn court case

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Retail giant Best Buy is defending allegations filed by a White Plains law firm in a class-action lawsuit that claim the company is not compensating workers for time they worked.

Gerald Lawrence, an attorney with Lowey Dannenburg Cohen of White Plains, filed the suit in New York state Supreme Court, along with another attorney, Eric Young of Kenney Egan McCafferty & Young.

The suit alleges that after clocking out, employees are required to wait in line at a security checkpoint and submit to a search, during which they are not being paid.

A Best Buy spokesperson said the suit has no merit.

Lawrence said that employees who are waiting to be searched at the security checkpoint after being clocked out

could lose more than 25 hours of paid time over the course of a year.

He also claimed that Best Buy routinely asks employees to work during mandated lunch hours and rest breaks. "Best buy has a practice of not compensating their employees for the time they worked," he said.

Lawrence said such practices violate New York labor laws.

Dawn Bryant, a spokesperson for Best Buy, called the lawsuit "disappointing" and said the company would vigorously defend itself.

"We pay our employees in compliance with all state and federal labor laws," she said.

A call to the state attorney general's office regarding whether it had also received similar complaints about Best Buy was not returned.

Lawrence said he was contacted by Best Buy employees in New York after they had heard about a similar suit he filed against the company in Philadelphia. Lowey Dannenburg Cohen also has a suburban Philadelphia office, where Lawrence now works.

That case is just in its beginnings,

as attorneys for Best Buy have filed a motion with the court to dismiss.

Lawrence said the company cannot force employees to work during mandated break times, and that employees standing in line to be checked before leaving for the day should be paid for that time. "We want to see our clients fully compensated for the work they perform," he said.

Bryant said Best Buy "expects our employees to take all their breaks" and that the company policy reflects this.

"That's not how we run our business, and I expect that any findings that are presented will support that."

Lawrence believes that the Best Buy employees he represents are being shortchanged, and is hoping the lawsuit brings the issue to light.

"Once this is called to (Best Buy's) attention, it is our hope that they will change their policies," he said.

The lawsuit seeks to cover Best Buy workers in 33 New York stores. Lawrence said with each store having between 50 and 100 employees, a class-action suit could represent potentially thousands of New York Best Buy employees.

