

Jury awards \$1.1 million to 4 flight attendants over tainted uniforms

By Douglas Saunders Sr.

Daily Journal Staff Writer

Several more cases are expected to be heard now that an Alameda County jury found the manufacturer of American Airlines uniforms was responsible for causing debilitating illnesses to its flight attendants.

“We represent 400 plus flight attendants from American Airlines who got new uniforms sometime between 2015 and 2016,” said lead trial attorney Daniel Balaban of Balaban & Spielberger LLP. “Shortly after that happened, thousands of them started complaining to American Airlines and to the Union about skin reactions, breathing problems, and various other ailments.”

The uniforms were originally distributed contaminated with formaldehyde. Balaban

had the uniforms tested years later, proving his theory in court. *Poole v. Twin Hill Acquisition Co. et al.*, RG17876798, (Alameda Co. Super., filed Sept. 27, 2017)

“Years after they were worn and washed many times, they still showed significant levels of formaldehyde,” Balaban explained. “Our theory and what we proved was that they likely contained much higher levels at the time that they were worn some years prior.”

Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith partner Dana A. Fox, representing Twin Hill Acquisition, was unavailable for comment.

In the bellwether trial, which lasted approximately five weeks, plaintiffs’ attorneys selected two plaintiffs from the pool of 425, and defense attorneys selected two. The jury awarded the plaintiff-selected flight attendants nearly \$1.1 million and the defense-selected flight attendants \$15,000.

“This verdict is a resounding victory, not only for these four brave flight attendants but for every American Airlines employee forced to wear these dangerous uniforms,” Balaban said. “I hope this jury’s verdict sends a message to uniform manufacturers and employers that cutting costs at the expense of safety is bad for workers, bad for customers, and bad for their bottom line.”

About 150,000 uniforms were shipped to flight attendants by Twin Hill, the manufacturer of the uniforms. Some American workers say they have suffered permanent chemical sensitivities since wearing them.

Balaban said he expects the next round of cases to be tried sometime in early 2024.

douglas_saunders@dailyjournal.com