Station owner is blaming 'white stuff' for shutdown

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Williams about the flecks. She said the material is used in the production of items such as toothpaste, detergent and baking powder.

In a letter to Williams from Jerry E. Bishop, plant manager, in June, Bishop said: "We have and will continue to wash vehicles that may have been inadvertently dusted because of our operations."

STILL, WILLIAMS maintains that if left for a day or two the material becomes virtually impossible to remove.

And there seems to be little doubt that he has lost at least some business.

One customer, Curtis Smith, said, "I've taken my car over there and it's come back just covered with that dust. There are some places where it's eaten the paint down to the base metal.

"It's a shame. He's a good, honest mechanic. But I don't want to get the paint eaten off my car."

LARRY MANNING, a St. Louis roofer and former customer, says, "Sometimes it looks like it's snowing there. If you let it set two or three days, you can't get it off.

"But what good does it do? If you don't like it, move."

Chuck Rancilio, an employee at J&C Armature & Auto Electric Co., 8107 Ivory St., says of the powder, "Some days, you walk outside and see the stuff coming down and you wonder, 'How can they get away with that?' "

Because of the pending suit, William R. Bosse, the city's air pollution control commissioner, declined comment on the matter.

BUT RECORDS IN his office show that the plant was cited for the emissions in July, for exceeding the legal size of particulate. City tests of the material indicated it is an unknown crystaline substance, according to pollution-control reports.

Also in July, an investigator with the air pollution control office noted in a memo that in-plant housekeeping and the cleanup of outside spills at the plant "needs to be greatly improved.

"Any particulate fallout in the plant area or on adjoining properties is probably caused by windblown particulates from the above-mentioned spills and could be greatly reduced by better cleanup procedures."

LITTLE MORE THAN a stub remained of Williams' cigar as he wiped the dust from the chrome on the gas pump earlier this week.

"Everybody says I'm fighting too big a battle," said Williams, who has a lease for the station site through December. "Maybe I am. Maybe I'm grabbing at straws."

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