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by ill asbestos worker

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By ARTHUR K. LENEHAN

An employee of the Johns-Manville asbestos plant in Manville charged in a civil suit filed in Newark yesterday that the company has willfully exposed thousands of its employees to serious health hazards by obliging them to breathe air contaminated with asbestos dust and fibers.

The employee, 50-year-old Lanzo Murray of Plainfield, filed the suit as a class action on behalf of himself and every other Johns-Manville employee who may have become ill because of working conditions at the international company's plants.

According to Murray's law-

yer, Lloyd Gipson of Plainfield, Murray is suffering from asbestosis, a respiratory ailment which is caused by the chronic inhalation of asbestos particles. Gipson asserts in the suit that in other cases, inhalation of asbestos may have caused scarring of the lungs or cancer of the lungs or stomach.

"I think that almost every long-term employee at that plant is suffering from asbestosis," Gipson said yesterday. "This is a serious condition, sometimes a fatal one. It's like black lung. It's definitely caused by inhaling excessive amounts of asbestos."

Gipson said that any employee of the company who wishes to join in the suit filed yesterday will be entitled to damages should the suit succeed. There are about 2,200 employees at the Manville plant, and many times that number at other Johns-Manville plants elsewhere. Gipson said that federal court rules prohibited him from discussing the total amount of the damages he will seek.

Along with Johns-Manville, the suit named as defendants three companies that supplied raw asbestos to Johns-Manville or bought finished asbestos products from Johns-Manville. The three other de-

(Please turn to Page 15)

Johns-Manville sued by ailing employee

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(Continued from Page One)

Defendant companies are Bell's Asbestos, Casser Asbestos, and the Asbestos Corp. Ltd., all of which are located in Canada.

The suit charges that Johns-Manville and the other defendants negligently failed to provide Johns-Manville employees with appropriate protective clothing, failed to package asbestos in a way that would have reduced hazards, and failed to warn the employees about health hazards, although these hazards were well known to executives in the industry.

In its form and in its specific allegations, the suit filed yesterday resembles a suit that was filed in federal court last May by 161 asbestos workers formerly employed at the

Passaic plant of the now defunct Raybestos-Manhattan Corp.

The Raybestos workers made the same allegations about health hazards entailed in the manufacture of asbestos products. They named as defendants Johns-Manville, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. of New York, which reportedly advised the Raybestos company on matters of safety; The Asbestos Corp. of America, which is located in Canada, and the three Canadian companies named in yesterday's suit.

Karl Asch, the attorney representing the Raybestos workers, said that Raybestos was not named as a defendant in the suit because of

free to discuss.

Asch filed his suit before the establishment of new federal court rules on the specification of money demands. He is seeking \$25 million in damages from the defendant companies — \$2 million for each of the workers he represents.

The Raybestos Corp. used asbestos to manufacture items such as brake linings. Johns-Manville, the largest manufacturer of asbestos products in the world, concentrates on producing insulation, roofing, and pipe.

Johns-Manville employees who received telephone inquiries about the suit at the company's plant in Manville yesterday referred them to the

Denver. Col. A spokesman for the company in Denver said he could not respond to the allegations made in the suit.

The company, which sells about \$1 billion worth of building materials each year, has long been embroiled in national and local controversies over the effects of asbestos in the air. It has maintained that its operations present no serious health hazard, either to its employees or to residents of communities surrounding its plants. Some employees and some medical authorities have argued vociferously to the contrary.

According to Dr. Maxwell Brown, a surgeon from Brookline, a study of the side effects of asbestos in 1972,

particles in and around the Manville plant have been great enough to produce scores of cases of mesothelioma, a form of lung cancer associated with the inhalation of asbestos particles.

Brown testified before a congressional committee that mesothelioma and asbestosis are almost invariably contracted in middle or old age, after the patient has been breathing contaminated air for many years.

The U.S. Department of Labor announced four years ago that it would implement more stringent regulations on the contamination of air with asbestos, but that action was later postponed for four years, at the request of Johns-Man-

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