

# City/State

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## Suit claims Krannert building caused illness

■ Institute ventilation system blamed for sickening employees and patients.

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Eight people, four of them current or former employees of the Krannert Institute of Cardiology, say the Krannert building made them sick.

The eight filed a lawsuit Tues-

day in Marion Superior Court. They are seeking to represent thousands of employees, patients, researchers and others who have passed through the doors of the building at 1111 W. 10th St. since the 1950s.

The building's heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, the lawsuit contends, has caused numerous illnesses over the years.

The alleged failure of Krannert; Wishard Memorial Hospital, the building's landlord; and the Marion County Health and Hospital Corp., to maintain and inspect that system means they should have to pay, the suit said.

Individuals in a class action are unknown at this time, but they deserve compensatory and punitive damages, the lawsuit contends.

Four of the plaintiffs are named in the lawsuit, while four wish to be unnamed and are referred to as

Jane and John Does.

Erna Martin, a Carmel resident and an employee of Krannert since 1985, and her husband, Charles, are two of the plaintiffs.

Among the others are Deborah Courtney, an Indianapolis resident and an employee of Krannert from August 1991 to December 1992, and her husband, George. Of the unnamed plaintiffs, one is a former employee; the other is a current employee. The other two plaintiffs are their spouses.

Joe DiLaura, a spokesman for

Wishard, said the hospital's legal department is aware of the lawsuit but has not seen it and cannot comment, he said.

Three of the plaintiffs said on Tuesday they had gone to the hospital for help with their problems, and were unable to get the situation resolved. "We were told they checked it out and everything was fine," said Deborah Courtney.

The lawsuit maintains the building's HVAC systems caused improper ventilation, which reduced the supply of outdoor air

and caused a high concentration of contaminants from indoor sources.

Thousands of people were exposed to various chemical, biological and fungal contaminants, the lawsuit contends.

"Our experts say the mold could have caused these problems," said Kenneth B. Moll, a Chicago attorney representing the plaintiffs. "When you're dealing with thousands of chemicals, it

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will be impossible to prove conclusively which chemicals caused these problems."

The lawsuit lists injuries suffered by the class of people, including cancer, leukemia, chronic fatigue syndrome, nausea, headaches, chest tightness and asthma.

"It's put a halt to my life," said Michael Klug, 29, a medical student who has taken classes in the building and complains of asthma caused by chemicals and mold.

Attorneys who filed the lawsuit said he would be among those included as plaintiffs if the courts allow the lawsuit to become a class action.

The lawsuit details attempts to investigate air quality in the building.

In 1994, John Beltz, a certified hygienist for the environmental health and safety department at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, had people fill out questionnaires about air quality in response to complaints.

According to the lawsuit, 50 percent of the people who filled out questionnaires reported symptoms consistent with people who have been exposed to improper ventilation.

In February 1995, IUPUI hired Mycotech Biological Inc. to collect samples from the HVAC systems. Those samples contained two known fungi and aero-allergens that may cause allergic reactions in people, according to the lawsuit. In moderate-to-high concentrations, the two fungi can cause the development of allergic diseases.

The lawsuit also alleges the HVAC system in the building does not meet the minimum requirements of several agencies, including the American Lung and American Medical associations.