

SICK BUS WORKERS FUME

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More than a dozen former transit workers will take on city bus and engine manufacturers, claiming that toxic diesel fumes caused a cluster of health ailments.

The men, who worked between 1958 and 1999, suffer from a variety of cancers

and heart problems that they say can be directly linked to thousands of hours spent in unventilated depots breathing thick smoke.

"Both the bus manufacturers and the diesel-engine manufactures undoubtedly knew [of the dangers] and never offered a single syllable of warning," said the

workers' lawyer, John Dearie. "I suspect these diesel litigations will explode because of the enormity of exposure."

The lawsuit will be filed today in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Bronx state supreme courts.

The workers held a variety of jobs, including cleaners, drivers and "shifTERS,"

who move the buses around in the depots. In the winter, the men said, it was common practice to leave the buses running overnight.

"If you didn't, they would stall on the driver [the next morning]," said Connor Hartnett, 72.

"No one ever said anything. We weren't given any rules or regulations for run-

ning buses in the depots."

Hartnett, a one-time marathon runner who never smoked, worked out of several depots in Harlem. He was diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer last year.

"In the old depots, diesel fumes were all over the place," he said. "You couldn't see your hand in front of your face. You

couldn't see the buses just a few feet away from you. No one knew how dangerous it was."

A spokesman for New York City Transit said the agency would not comment on pending litigation. The agency is not named in the suit, but could be added later, Dearie said.

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