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**Cancer Victims' Suit Points to IBM Chemicals;**  
Manufacturing: Company is accused of ignoring health concerns in 'clean rooms' for disk drives, microcircuitry.;

By: From Reuters

A group of cancer victims and their families has sued IBM Corp., alleging that the computer company's San Jose plant exposed employees to fatal levels of cancer-causing chemicals for some three decades, a lawyer for the group said Monday.

Amanda Hawes said the suit filed in Santa Clara County Superior Court last week also named several other companies that make the chemicals used by International Business Machines Corp., including Shell Oil Co. and Union Carbide Corp.

The wrongful-death suit alleges that IBM "willfully and recklessly" ignored health concerns over chemicals used in "clean rooms" where disk drives and microcircuitry are manufactured.

"Clean doesn't necessarily mean safe," said Hawes, who brought the suit on behalf of families of five former IBM employees who have died of cancer and four more now battling the disease.

"The materials used in this industry may be very advanced tech but it doesn't mean that they are free of risk to the workers," Hawes said. "These are people who always thought they were being totally protected."

Tara Sexton, an IBM spokeswoman, said the company did not comment on on-going litigation.

"IBM has a long-standing commitment to a safe working environment, and compliance with all health and safety regulations and laws," Sexton said.

The suit alleges that IBM did not adequately test the human health effects of "clean room" chemicals, to which scientists and researchers are exposed as part of the manufacturing process.

Victims involved in the suit suffered from various types of cancer, including melanoma, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, renal cell cancer, breast cancer and cancer of the salivary glands.

"These are all relatively young people," Hawes said, noting that the suit sought punitive damages against IBM and the chemical makers. A separate suit was filed in New York in 1996 aimed at the chemical manufacturers, alleging that a wide variety of cancers could be traced to chemicals used in the semiconductor industry.

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