

IBM facing more lawsuits in chemical-exposure case

By Phil Waga
Staff Writer

Attorneys involved in cross-country lawsuits charging IBM exposed workers to cancer-causing chemicals in semiconductor plants yesterday said further legal action against the company is on the horizon.

"More suits will absolutely be filed," said William DeProspero, a lawyer in upstate Goshen who represents more than 100 plaintiffs in a New York State lawsuit slowly making its way through State Supreme Court in White Plains.

Please see SUITS, 6E

Suits: IBM facing more lawsuits

Part Chester Daily Item 2/24/98
Continued from page 1E

Amanda Hawes, a California lawyer who last week helped nine plaintiffs file a second suit against IBM in Silicon Valley, said more former and current IBM employees would certainly be added to the suit.

Tara Sexton, an IBM spokeswoman, said the company does not comment on litigation. She added that Armonk-based IBM has a longstanding commitment to a safe working environment.

The suits question whether IBM took the necessary precautions for employees working in specially designed environments known as clean rooms. Employees in the rooms wear protective clothing and air is constantly recirculated. But the lawsuits say that precaution is as much to protect the chips and computer disc drives being manufactured as the employees.

The New York suit, filed in 1996 and 1997, asks for more than \$3 billion for workers, former workers and their children who developed cancer and other medical problems as a result, it is alleged, of working at IBM plants in East Fishkill and Essex Junction, Vt.

The newest suit was filed on Feb. 18 in Superior Court in Santa Clara County, Calif., where IBM has a major plant. The suit represents five families of former IBM employees who died of cancer, along with four other current and former IBM workers suffering from the disease. The suit does not specify a dollar amount.

"People assume that when they hear clean rooms it means the environment is clean and safe," Hawes said. "They don't realize that the environment is not meant to protect the employees but to help the company."