

Source: The Buzbee Law Firm and Bencomo & Associates

FEMA, Manufacturers of Allegedly Toxic Hurricane Relief Trailers Face New Lawsuit,  
According to Legal Team for Displaced Gulf Coast Citizens

NEW ORLEANS, March 19 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A consolidated class action lawsuit that could include thousands of Gulf Coast citizens who have resided in allegedly toxic housing units distributed after the landfalls of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 was filed against the federal government and dozens of trailer manufacturers in New Orleans federal court Tuesday.

The lawsuit, which adds new claims to and consolidates several cases previously filed in Gulf Coast federal courts, names as defendants the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and 62 manufacturers of government-distributed travel trailers, park models, and mobile homes, according to the seven-law firm Plaintiffs' Steering Committee, which will seek to have the case certified as a class action.

The Complaint, which names 55 representative plaintiffs, claims multiple violations of federal and Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama law. The lawsuit alleges that manufacturers failed to warn the federal government about the risks of formaldehyde used in particle board, fiberboard, plywood, glues, and adhesives used to manufacture the housing units and then "ignored or deliberately and fraudulently concealed" the risks.

FEMA is accused in the lawsuit of distributing housing units well after undisclosed air sampling of housing units at government staging facilities showed formaldehyde levels that exceeded government standards; seeking to avoid comprehensive testing of the housing units after widespread health problems were reported by residents of the housing units; ignoring the scientific work and concerns of federal scientists familiar with formaldehyde issues; and manipulating governmental testing of the housing units by seeking to ensure that long-term formaldehyde exposure considerations would not be addressed in testing findings.

Attorney Tony Buzbee, of the Buzbee Law Firm, in Houston, Texas, stated, "We contend that FEMA and the manufacturers knew or should have known of health hazards inherent in these housing units. Published medical studies – and the government's own testing – make it clear that the dangers of long-term formaldehyde exposure were no secret to either the federal government or the manufacturers. Our clients report a wide range of symptoms that are consistent with formaldehyde exposure. The time is coming when the industry will be forced to explain why these housing units were so toxic to the displaced families living in them."

Attorney Raul Bencomo, of Bencomo & Associates, in New Orleans, stated, "Until very recently, FEMA's handling of this health issue has been deplorable, but we do agree with the agency's position that responsibility for the safety of families living in the trailers also falls on the manufacturers. We are determined to have the government and the responsible manufacturers account for creating and prolonging this crisis. Because the government paid billions of taxpayer dollars for these housing units, we also urge the Congress to investigate this matter."

The families are represented by the legal team of Mr. Buzbee; Mr. Bencomo; Gerald Meunier and Justin Woods, of Gainsburgh, Benjamin, David, Meunier & Warshauer, L.L.C. in New Orleans (Plaintiffs' Co-Liaison Counsel); Frank D'Amico, Jr., D'Amico & Associates, in New Orleans;

Matthew Moreland, of the Becnel Law Firm, in Reserve, Louisiana; Linda Nelson, of Lambert & Nelson, in New Orleans; and Ronnie Penton, of the Law Offices of Ronnie G. Penton; in Slidell, Louisiana.

Besides FEMA, the named defendants include Coachmen Industries (NYSE: COA); Fleetwood Enterprises Inc. (NYSE: FLE); Thor Industries Inc. (NYSE: THO); Gulf Stream Coach, Inc; Forest River Inc.; Jayco Enterprises, Inc.; Monaco Coach Corporation; Pilgrim International, Inc.; Recreation By Design, LLC; and Starcraft RV, Inc.

The case is “In Re FEMA Trailer Formaldehyde Product Liability Litigation” (MDL No. 1873), in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, New Orleans Division. More information is available at [www.toxic-trailer.com](http://www.toxic-trailer.com).

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