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Mechanic sues General Electric over helicopter incident that allegedly caused serious shoulder damage

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By JON CAMPISI

Two attorneys representing General Electric Co. in litigation stemming

from an alleged workplace injury contend the matter belongs in federal, not state, court because the amount of damages sought by the plaintiff is likely to exceed the jurisdictional limit in a Pennsylvania courtroom.

John E. Salmon and Zachary J. Ballard, of the firm Salmon Richezza Singer & Turchi, filed a removal notice Jan. 3 seeking to transfer a civil action commenced this fall by Chester County resident Timothy Jones from the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Jones is suing General Electric over a Sept. 22, 2011, incident that he says left him with permanent shoulder damage.

On that date, Jones, who was employed by Sikorsky Aerospace Services as a lead mechanic, was dispatched to perform maintenance on a helicopter owned by the defendant at one of the company's facilities in New York State.

Jones and members of his team were tasked with pressure testing and re-packing emergency flotation bags on one of General Electric's helicopters, according to the plaintiff's complaint.

After he finished the main portion of his assigned duties, Jones performed a final check and inspection with one of his employer's quality assurance inspectors, the lawsuit states.

It was at this point, while the helicopter was up on jacks in order to expose the chambers on the underside of the craft where the emergency flotation bags were stored, that Jones was struck by one of the chamber's doors, which exploded and sent the plaintiff "catapulting" across the hangar floor.

The incident occurred while, unbeknownst to the plaintiff, General Electric mechanics were performing an electrical check of the helicopter's circuitry, the complaint states.

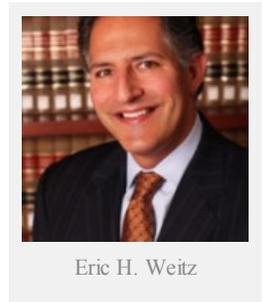
The mechanics ended up triggering the explosive charges on the emergency flotation system, which caused the flotation bag chamber doors to explode onto the plaintiff's left shoulder.

Jones claims he sustained a host of serious and permanent injuries to his shoulder that includes a decrease range of motion and loss of functional capacity.

He is seeking damages relating to past and future pain and suffering, medical expenses, lost earnings, past and future humiliation and embarrassment, and past and future emotional and psychological trauma.

General Electric is accused of a variety of negligent actions, including failing to properly train its mechanics regarding safety precautions, failing to properly create safety policies and procedures for its mechanics, failing to follow existing safety policies and procedures for working on helicopters, failing to ensure that the blast zone was clear before performing an electrical check of the craft, and failing to warn Jones, the plaintiff, that an electrical check of the helicopter was going to be performed.

In his suit, Jones says he is seeking damages in excess of \$50,000, but in their removal notice, General Electric's lawyers maintain the plaintiff's sought damages



will exceed \$75,000.

The defense attorneys also argue that the matter belongs in federal court because there is diversity in citizenship among the parties.

Jones is being represented by Philadelphia lawyer Eric H. Weitz of Messa & Associates.

The state case ID number is 130901107 and the federal case number is 2:14-cv-00018-EL.

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