

Snakebite victim is suing Walmart for damages

Man claims his medical bills from 2012 incident at Clarkston store are more than \$100,000

Lewiston Tribune

ASOTIN - A Clarkston man who was bitten by a rattlesnake in Walmart last spring has filed a personal injury lawsuit against the retailer in Asotin County Superior Court.

According to court documents, Mica Craig is seeking recovery of an unspecified amount of damages. Craig is represented by Seattle attorneys Anne M. Bremner and Jason D. Anderson of the Frey Buck firm. Walmart's counsel is attorney Troy Nelson of Spokane.

In the lawsuit, Craig said he was bitten by a rattlesnake May 11, 2012, in the garden supply section of Clarkston's Walmart. Craig said he killed the snake by stepping on it and a bystander took him to the hospital.

Craig told the Tribune last year he was buying mulch at the store when he reached down to grab what he thought was a stick, but what he said was a rattlesnake bit him in the right hand. The incident made national news last year and became fodder for late night talk show hosts.

According to the lawsuit, no employee assisted Craig or otherwise approached him prior to his departure for medical treatment. His medical bills were in excess of \$100,000.

Craig wanted to take possession of the dead snake, according to the lawsuit, only to learn Walmart had incinerated the snake in a barrel at the rear of the store shortly after the incident. Court records indicate Craig had reason to believe the alleged "immolation" of the snake was a deliberate attempt by Walmart to destroy evidence of his injury.

Craig said he had extreme pain and his hand swelled to the size of a melon, according to the lawsuit, and he has residual pain to this day.

According to court documents, a Walmart representative contacted Craig on May 13, 2012 - two days after the bite incident - and allegedly attempted to coerce him into settling and releasing his claims immediately. Craig refused to do so.

At a later date that same year, Craig was allegedly approached by police officers who publicly asserted he was wanted for questioning in connection with an alleged fraud against Walmart. According to the lawsuit, the officers allegedly "incorrectly and harshly" implied Craig performed various acts of subterfuge regarding the rattlesnake. It was suggested Craig had orchestrated a convoluted scheme resulting in him being bitten by the lethal snake in Walmart. No criminal investigation is open in regard to the snake and Walmart.

According to the lawsuit, Craig believes Walmart has video surveillance of the incident. He said he is unable to use his fingers, has decreased range of motion, wrist stiffness and his hand is permanently disfigured.