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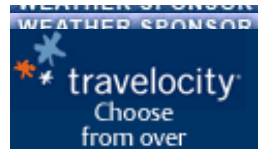
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## TONAWANDAS: Twin City files suit

By Dave Hill/hilld@gnnewspaper.com

Twin City Ambulance and three of its employees are going to court over allegations that the company refused to assist the two Buffalo police officers who were shot in the line of duty in December 2006.

The employees allege that Twin City management refused to aid Buffalo officers Carl Andolina and Patricia Parete the night of Dec. 5, 2006. Andolina was released from Erie County Medical Center two days after the shooting, but Parete was paralyzed from the neck down. The defendants also say the company forced injured people to wait significantly longer for medical care by routinely refusing to respond to mutual aid calls.

Twin City countered with a defamation and false claims suit filed Dec. 4, which the company waited until Friday to announce. Wayne Gradl, the attorney representing Twin City in the case, told the Tonawanda News on Tuesday that proceedings for the case probably will begin within the next two months.

Twin City says there's no truth to the employees' claims.




"I find it personally offensive that three rogue employees used a tragic event to maliciously defame the company in an attempt to injure its business reputation," Twin City Ambulance President Terence Clark said in a statement.

"After careful consideration, it appears that litigation is the best way to get the truth out," he added. "We want to vindicate the

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company's good name by way of a jury verdict."

On the night the officers were shot, Twin City inadvertently received a call from Erie County dispatchers that two police officers were wounded, Gradl said.

But the company had stopped serving Buffalo and therefore should not have received such a call. Still, a Twin City operations manager looked into the matter and learned that Rural/Metro Medical Services had four ambulances on the scene, meaning it wasn't necessary for Twin City to respond, Gradl said.

The next day, Jeffrey Abbott, one of the defendants in this case, told local media that Twin City refused to assist the wounded officers. There also were letters published in the newsletters of the International Association of EMTs and Paramedics and the Buffalo police bad-mouthing the City of Tonawanda-based company, which serves Erie and Niagara counties.

"That bumped up the slander another notch," Gradl said. "...It's just a flat lie that we refuse mutual aid calls routinely and make people wait for ambulance services longer than they should."

After the employees' public statements, Twin City decided that it was best to file a defamation suit and get the matter resolved in court, Gradl said.

One of the three employees named in the suit is Tim Licht, who was featured in a Tonawanda News story Sept. 28, 2006, the focus of which was a dispute Licht had with Twin City over bereavement leave.

The two other employees are Jeffrey R. Abbott and Christian M. Cloen. All three are still employed with Twin City. Cloen is a national representative for the EMT's union. Gradl said the union is not a defendant in the case.

None of the three employees, nor their lawyers, could be reached Tuesday to comment.

Contact reporter David J. Hill at 693-1000, ext. 115.



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