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Travelodge clerks say they were not paid, given pills

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Four current and former workers at the Travelodge of Mill Valley have sued their employer for unpaid wages and claim they were given drugs to work faster. The employees, Delia DeLeon, Angela Arias, Eluvia Mazariegos and Leticia Vallalobos, claim their boss required them to work without pay - and gave them pills to speed them up while completing their chores.

The Travelodge, at 707 Redwood Highway, is owned and operated by Mohamed Ahmud. He could not be reached for comment.

According to the complaint, some workers were required to work "off the clock," or without punching a time clock to document their hours.

The former employees contend they were not paid for a week of on-the-job-training, were denied meal and rest breaks, and had time shaved from their records to avoid overtime.

"Employers must pay their employees for all the hours they work," said Karen Carrera, of the law firm Talamantes, Villegas & Carrera. "Those employers who think they can get away with this type of unlawful conduct risk paying additional damages, interest on unpaid wages, steep penalties and attorneys' fees."

The class-action lawsuit was brought under a state unfair business practices statute that allows plaintiffs to sue businesses that break the law to gain competitive edge, Carrera said.

State wage and hour laws require hourly workers to be paid one and a half times their normal rate of pay for any hours worked in excess of eight a day, or more than 40 in a week. Double the normal rate is required for workers who put in more than 12 hours in a day.

Employers also are required to provide meal and rest breaks during the workday. The former Travelodge of Mill Valley employees are seeking recovery of what they claim are unpaid wages, penalties and interest for themselves and all current and one-time employees of the motel.

They also want to ensure that Travelodge complies with wage and hour laws in the future. A case management hearing is scheduled for July 11.

Read more Mill Valley stories at the IJ's Mill Valley page.

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