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**6 passengers sue Alaska Air over mishap that ripped hole in plane**

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**By JAMES WALLACE**  
P-I AEROSPACE REPORTER

A New York law firm that specializes in aviation cases will file suit in Los Angeles today on behalf of six passengers on an Alaska Airlines jet that lost cabin pressure when a foot-long hole was ripped in the fuselage at 26,000 feet, an attorney with the firm said.

"I was terrified. We thought we were going to die," said Mark Reveley, 32, who was on the plane and is one of the passengers in the suit.

Reveley now lives in the Los Angeles area, but he grew up in Seattle. He had been visiting his family in Seattle over Christmas and was returning home when the incident occurred Dec. 26.

Alaska Airlines and Menzies Aviation, the company that performs baggage handling and other ramp operations for Alaska, are named as defendants.

The plane was hit by a baggage cart operated by a Menzies worker while the jet was parked at Sea-Tac Airport.

The damage to the fuselage -- which was not immediately reported by the worker to Alaska or Menzies officials -- was serious enough that it apparently resulted in a hole in the fuselage after the plane took off a short while later.

The MD-80 was flying from Seattle to Burbank, Calif., when it lost cabin pressure and had to make an emergency dive from about 26,000 feet. It returned to Seattle and landed safely.

The suit will be filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, said James Kreindler of Kreindler & Kreindler.

Five of the passengers who are suing are Swedish natives. One is Reveley's girlfriend, who was seated next to him.

The defendants "continue to suffer physical pain, emotional stress, loss of enjoyable life and other permanent compensable injuries all with resulting damages," according to the lawsuit, a copy of which was provided to the Seattle P-I. It claims that Alaska Airlines and Menzies Aviation were negligent.

"Among other things, the Alaska defendants knew, or should have known, that the Menzies defendants were not carefully and safely handling their aviation ground support and services responsibilities yet continued to hire and pay Menzies to perform those services," the suit says.

Alaska hired Menzies Aviation after firing nearly 500 unionized baggage handlers in May.

Menzies is now conducting a 90-day review of its Alaska operations at Sea-Tac with the help of its safety

**BACKGROUND**

- Loss of pressure forces airliner to land
- Worker who damaged plane won't face charges
- Another Alaska Air jet is damaged on the ground

people from around the world.

Neither Alaska nor Menzies would comment on the lawsuit Thursday, because it had not yet been filed.

This is not the first time Kreindler has tangled with Alaska Airlines. The firm represented the families of several passengers who were killed when Alaska Flight 261 crashed into the Pacific off the California coast in January 2000. All 88 aboard died.

A few years ago, Kreindler won a case similar to the incident on the Alaska jet that lost cabin pressure. That case involved an American Airlines jet that experienced about 30 seconds of severe turbulence on a flight over Minnesota in 1995. A jury awarded 13 passengers a total of \$2.22 million. Among the passengers who sued was Nancy Spielberg, the sister of filmmaker Steven Spielberg.

"The real message here is that it's not inconsequential when you scare people and they think they are going to die," Kreindler was quoted as saying after the jury's verdict.

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