

Manhattan Starbucks use dangerous pesticides to control filthy conditions: lawsuit

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By Stephen Rex
Brown

That venti at Starbucks comes with a secret shot of pesticide, a pair of new lawsuits charge.

Two pest control technicians and a former employee say that management of Starbucks locations in Manhattan have routinely used a powerful pesticide not meant to be deployed around food or humans to control filthy conditions.

The suits, filed Tuesday in state and federal court, say that management ignored pleas for years about the use of No-Pest Strips with dichlorovinyl dimethyl phosphate or DDVP. Photos included in the lawsuits show the strips in food storage areas, near food prep equipment and by air vents.

The strips are supposed to be deployed only in unoccupied buildings, the suit says. The Center for Disease Control warned that DDVP should not be used in kitchens or where food is prepared or served. Exposure to the chemical can result in loss of bladder control, muscle tremors, labored breathing, nausea, anxiety, diarrhea, muscle weakness, convulsions, paralysis or even death, according to the suit.

"New Yorkers deserve to know what they are putting in their bodies and we call upon Starbucks to explain, as we allege in the complaint, its failure to take appropriate care for its customers' well-being," said attorney Doug Wigdor, who filed a class action on behalf of Starbucks customers in Manhattan.

The federal lawsuit alleges that Starbucks fired two third-party pest technicians, Paul D'Auria and Jill Shwiner, and store manager Rafael Fox after they made repeated warnings about the danger.



"Rather than responding to our clients' urgent complaints, Starbucks instead chose to methodically bury them. In filing this lawsuit, Mr. Fox, Mr. D'Auria and Ms. Shwiner are speaking out for the protection of tens of thousands of hardworking New Yorkers who

would never otherwise have imagined what's in the air around them when they set foot into Starbucks stores in Manhattan," attorney Ariel Graff said.

Starbucks did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Stephen Rex Brown is a reporter covering New York City courts for the New York Daily News.