

Suit seeks to force Mattel to pay for lead testing

By Justin Grant

Posted 20 August 2007 @ 07:11 pm EST

Toy maker Mattel Inc was sued on Monday in an attempt to force it to set up a fund to pay for testing children who may have been exposed to lead poisoning from its toys, according to a Los Angeles-based attorney.

The attorney, Jeffrey Killino, said a family in Los Angeles is the lead plaintiff on the case, but added he is seeking class-action status for the case.

Mattel, best known for its Barbie dolls and Fisher Price toys, declined to comment on the case and said it does not comment on pending litigation.

"Recalling the toys is only the first step," Killino said in a statement. "If Mattel is really concerned about the safety of children, then it should address the root of the issue -- determining how many children were affected by these poisoned toys so they can get immediate treatment."

The company already faces one suit stemming from its Aug. 1 recall of 1.5 million Chinese-made toys because of lead paint. In that case, Florida parent Farrah Shoukry sued Mattel in U.S. District Court in New York and is seeking a refund for the toys, money for diagnostic tests for lead poisoning and damages.

Shoukry is also looking to have the suit certified as a class action, meaning it could determine the outcome for large numbers of people similarly affected.

Mattel launched a national advertising campaign last week in a bid to assure consumers that it is on top of product safety.

Last week, Mattel recalled millions of toys, including 436,000 die-cast toy cars from its "Cars" line, because they may have contained excessive amounts of lead, which can cause brain damage in children.

After the latest recall, affecting toys made in China between May and July 2007, Mattel CEO Robert Eckert said there may be more recalls.