

## **Formal harass lawsuit hits city - Female firefighter alleges a long pattern of abuse at Sacramento's Station 6.**

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**By Elizabeth Hume -- Bee Staff Writer**

***Published July 1, 2003***

***Story appeared in Region Section, Page B1 of The Bee***

A female firefighter filed a lawsuit Monday against the city of Sacramento, the Sacramento Fire Department and other firefighters, claiming sexual harassment in the workplace.

The suit comes after the city failed to respond within 45 days to a claim filed in May by Engineer Carol L. Irving after she said she experienced numerous workplace harassment incidents at Oak Park's Station 6.

Though Firefighter Eric Guida is the only individual listed as a co-defendant by name, the suit could name up to 50 others, said Wendy York, Irving's attorney.

"There's enough evidence against him to hold him responsible civilly and we are learning every day of new information that might implicate other firefighters," York said. "The decision to name other co-Doe defendants will remain open throughout the litigation."

Irving is seeking damages for retaliation, failure to prevent discrimination, intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress, defamation and assault and battery.

Fire Department officials referred comment to the City Manager's Office, where officials said that the City Attorney's Office had not yet received a copy of the suit and could not comment.

Guida could not be reached for comment.

The incidents started more than a year ago when Irving, who has been with the department for eight years, transferred to Station 6 on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to work as an engineer on C-shift.

Irving's name was crossed off the transfer list and orange paint, the station's identifying color, was placed in her coat pocket, according to the suit. She tried to ignore the incidents, hoping they were just pranks, York said.

But within a few days Irving found a four-letter word written in black ink on her ax handle. She immediately reported all three incidents to Fire Department and city officials, York said.

Irving then left the station for a few weeks on medical leave. When she returned to Station 6 Guida confronted her on several occasions, York said.

After she again reported the incidents Irving found a picture of a doll with a gun to its head and duct tape across its mouth in her locker, a mousetrap in her work boot and a vulgarity written by her name in the station's office.

York said the harassment stemmed from a confrontation Irving had with Guida and several other firefighters at a meeting of drill instructors at the fire academy in 2002.

Irving spoke out against their philosophies of a fraternal brotherhood and their belief the Fire Department should be exclusive based on tradition.

The harassment at Station 6 started a few weeks after the academy ended, York said.

The suit also mentions other sexual harassment issues such as the reference to female firefighters as the "cancer" of the department and making such comments as "we lowered our standards by hiring women."

"I would say 30 years ago I heard that kind of thing, but I haven't heard that lately," said Chuck Bader, a recently retired deputy chief of the Sacramento Fire Department.

The suit specifically names "Orangemen" or "FOOLS" as specific perpetrators of this type of behavior. Guida is commonly known as an Orangeman and is president of the "NorCal FOOLS," the Northern California chapter of a national organization of firefighters.

The Orangemen have traditionally consisted of a group of firefighters who worked at Station 6. They originally took the name as a way of creating a common bond among co-workers in one of the busiest stations in the nation.

"They are a bunch of younger firefighters who embraced doing the job well, training, camaraderie and the family connection," Bader said.

York claims that some of the Orangemen went too far, taking the identification to an elitist attitude.

Bader said that Orangemen are more about company pride than elitism.

"All they were trying to do was be more professional by embracing training and expanding their minds," Bader said. "It's not any different from any sports team or any professional organization."

Another part of the lawsuit focuses on the administration's failure to take immediate action after Irving reported the incidents last June.

The investigation is ongoing.

Meanwhile, several firefighters have been transferred out of Station 6, including Irving, who was transferred to a less busy station.

Since then, Irving has been on indefinite medical leave, York said.

"This has absolutely devastated Carol," York said. "It was a dream of hers to pursue a career in firefighting. Now not only is she losing a way to earn an income, it's impacted her self-esteem, her health and ability to find a position here where she will be honestly evaluated."