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Passengers Sue Southwest Airlines After Exposure To Toxic Air

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Twin sisters who were seriously injured during a suspected toxic air fume event on a Southwest Airlines flight from Los Angeles filed a lawsuit in federal court in their hometown of Birmingham, Alabama today. The sisters now suffer from disabling neurological and respiratory symptoms.

Victoria Vaughn Holsted of Franklin, Tennessee, and Valerie Vaughn of Birmingham, Alabama allege in their complaint that as a result of a toxic air exposure onboard a Boeing 737 jet aircraft operated by Southwest Airlines on January 27, 2009, they have suffered severe injuries, including motor skill deficiencies, loss of balance, vision impairment and uncontrollable tremors. About one hour into the flight, Ms. Holsted and Ms. Vaughn, along with the other passengers, began to experience hypoxia, also known as oxygen deprivation, and extreme pressure in their ears, among other problems.

Once alerted to the air quality problem in the cabin, the pilot engaged the engines at full thrust and entered a steep ascent while advising passengers there had been a malfunction. As this occurred, super-heated air began to surge out of the ventilation system and onto passengers. A mist appeared to hang in the cabin. The plane was forced to make an emergency landing in Albuquerque, NM. When the plane landed, a Fire Marshall boarded the plane and directed passengers to exit the aircraft. Ms. Holsted and Ms. Vaughn then boarded another plane to Nashville.

Since Southwest Airlines Flight 1705, the sisters, age 45, have been forced to take extended leave from work due to their various symptoms. Victoria Vaughn Holsted is a real estate executive, her sister Valerie Vaughn is a PGA golf pro.

“I feel like I have been poisoned. I want my health back,” stated Valerie Vaughn.



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“I am worried that there may be other passengers from Flight 1705 who are also sick but don’t know why. They deserve to be told. I think about this every day,” stated Victoria Vaughn Holsted.

Despite repeated requests by Ms. Holsted and Ms. Vaughn, agents for Southwest Airlines refused to answer their questions seeking information as to the substances they were exposed to on Flight 1705.

“We are filing this lawsuit in part because we want to help our clients learn what chemicals they were exposed to on that flight so their doctors can provide them with proper medical treatment,” stated Alisa Brodkowitz, one of the attorneys for Ms. Holsted and Ms. Vaughn.

The sisters’ complaint alleges that Southwest Airlines negligently operated and maintained the jet aircraft, causing their injuries.

Brodkowitz Law, founded by aviation attorney Alisa Brodkowitz, is a Seattle law firm dedicated to providing powerful representation for individuals and their families after an injury or loss. We are committed to ensuring accountability, finding the negligent party and holding it responsible. We stand with our clients, seeking the restitution they are entitled to and working to achieve justice.