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## SICKENED ADMAN FILES DENTSU-IT

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September 25, 2003 -- A hall-of-fame advertising executive is in federal court with a novel pitch: He got fired because he had the World Trade Center cough.

Steve Penchina said he got violently ill from breathing acrid pollutants in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, and had to cut back his work schedule as executive creative director at DCA Advertising, owned by the world's largest ad group, Dentsu of Japan.

Penchina said his Japanese superiors berated and reprimanded him for missing 26 days of work in the three months following 9/11.

"Dentsu abhorred sick leave," he said, saying the firm eventually fired him - in violation of numerous state and federal sick-leave rules.

Penchina said the WTC air problems were so bad he couldn't even visit clients or his creative crews in lower Manhattan without choking or losing his vision from severely burning eyes.

Doctors ordered him to stay at home and undergo therapy for the asthmatic condition, which doctors said was worsened by the polluted air that blanketed much of Manhattan, according to the suit in Manhattan federal court.

Penchina, a winner of more than 300 advertising awards, including 19 Clios, and an inductee into the Advertising Hall of Fame, said he was stunned by the shabby treatment by his superiors.

Despite the violent coughing and loss of voice from the WTC air, he finished all his commercials.

*Paul Tharp*

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