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Boys Injured While Riding Bicycles Sue Wal-Mart

Plaintiffs Claim Bikes Caused Injuries

NBC 11 News

San Jose, Oakland, San Francisco

A group of boys who were injured while riding bicycles they claim were defective are suing retail giant Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and the company that imported the bicycles from China.

The suit claims Wal-Mart and San Rafael, Calif.-based Dynacraft BSC Inc. conspired to hide defects in a key bicycle part even after injuries were reported.

The trial began Monday in Marin County Superior Court.

The suit centers on the so-called quick-release devices attached to the bicycles' front wheels, which are designed to allow the wheels to be easily removed for maintenance.

The nine boys, ages 7 to 13, claim they smashed their faces onto pavement after the part malfunctioned and the front wheels came loose while they were riding.

The suit also names insurance administrator Carl Warren & Co., which investigated complaints for the importer, for allegedly conspiring to cover up the defects.

"Consumers in America deserve to be able to rely on the safety of products they buy for their children," said Mark Webb, a San Francisco lawyer representing the plaintiffs.

Wal-Mart said the bicycles in question, mostly Next Ultra Shock and Next Shock Zone mountain bikes, are safe as long as they are "properly used," and that the bikes' quick-release component has never been the subject of a recall or safety citation.

"Our view of the facts is substantially different from the plaintiffs'," said Wal-Mart spokesman Marty Heires.

Fletcher Alford, an attorney representing Dynacraft as well as Carl Warren & Co., said the claims are without merit. He declined to comment further.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is investigating the allegations, said agency spokesman Scott Wolfson.

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