

Staples overtime suits settled

Firm to pay \$42m
to avoid 'distraction'

By Erin Ailworth
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Staples Inc., the Framingham-based office supply retailer, yesterday said it reached a \$42 million settlement in several class-action lawsuits related to allegations that the company had not paid its assistant store managers overtime to which they were entitled.

A court must approve the settlement, which covers more than 5,500 current and former Staples employees. The settlement resolves claims dating back as far as 2002 and includes an agreement by Staples to drop an appeal of a verdict against it last year in New Jersey.

In a statement, Staples said it agreed to the settlement to "resolve the allegations and avoid further distraction from litigation that has been ongoing for the past three years."

In one case, former employee Ronald Stillman of New Jersey said he was not compensated for working 50-hour weeks as an assistant sales manager at Staples, where his work "required little skill" and no "managerial responsibilities," court records show.

"The plaintiffs allege that they didn't have the duties and responsibilities of management and were entitled to overtime," said attorney Jeffrey Gottlieb, who worked on the case. "Staples has denied that."

Gottlieb, who represents Stillman, said his client is happy that the case has been settled.

In a statement, Staples said: "Staples believes that its store labor model, which is based on a commitment to fair and respectful treatment of its associates, is fully compliant with applicable state and federal law."

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