

C O U R T S

Orkin Settles Suit, Will Pay \$2 Million

APARTMENT COMPLEX CHARGED COVERUP

By RAY REYES
The Tampa Tribune

TAMPA — Pest control giant Orkin Inc. has settled out of court with the owners of a Tampa apartment complex who claimed employees from the extermination company forged inspection forms and did not notify owners of the extent of the termite damage on the property.

According to terms of the settlement, Orkin will pay \$2 million to the owners of Park Place Apartments at 3132 W. Lambright Ave. Peter Cardillo, the attorney who represented Park Place, accepted the terms Tuesday.

The lawsuit alleged that employees from Orkin's regional offices in Tampa forged documents to "cover up annual re-inspections that weren't done," Cardillo said. The earliest incidents date to 1990, according to a civil complaint Cardillo filed in the 13th Judicial Circuit. The lawsuit was filed in July.

Douglas Brown, an Orlando attorney representing Orkin, said company executives asked him not to speak about the lawsuit to the media. An

Orkin spokeswoman could not be reached for comment Friday night.

According to the complaint, termite treatments were not performed properly at Park Place, and on some occasions, not enough pesticide was applied to the structures.

Orkin inspectors also failed to examine all areas of the complex, including the interior of apartment units, the complaint said.

The result was that Park Place, which has 10 apartment buildings and 128 units, became overrun with termites and sustained about \$3 million in damage, Cardillo said.

Money from the settlement will go toward repairs and renovations at Park Place, Cardillo said. The property owners' insurance will cover the rest, he said.

Orkin is headquartered in Atlanta, with about 400 branch offices. The company says it has more than 1.6 million customers and advertises itself as "The World's Best Termite Control," according to its Web site.

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