

GA Worker Fired For Refusing To Wear '666'

By Greg Bluestein, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A Georgia factory worker claims in a federal lawsuit that he was fired after he refused to wear a '666' sticker he feared would doom him to eternal damnation.

Billy E. Hyatt claims he was fired from Pliant Corp., a plastics factory in northern Georgia near Dalton, after he refused to wear a sticker proclaiming that his factory had been accident-free for 666 days. That number is considered the "mark of the beast" in the Bible's Book of Revelation describing the apocalypse.

Hyatt, who said he's a devout Christian, had worked for the north Georgia plastics company since June 2007 and like other employees wore stickers each day that proclaimed how long the factory had gone without an accident.

But he grew nervous in early 2009 as the number of accident-free days crept into the 600s. As the company's safety calendar approached day 666, Hyatt said he approached a manager and explained that wearing it would force him "to accept the mark of the beast and to be condemned to hell." He said the manager assured him he wouldn't have to wear the number.

When the day came on March 12, 2009, Hyatt sought a manager to discuss his request. He said he was told that his beliefs were "ridiculous" and that he should wear the sticker or serve a three-day suspension.

Hyatt took the three-day suspension, and was fired at a human resources meeting several days later. He then filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and his attorney Stephen Mixon said the agency granted him the right to sue the company in August.

The lawsuit, which seeks punitive damages and back pay, said the company forced him into a terrible situation: Keep his job or "abandon his religious beliefs."

The company, now known as Berry Plastics Corp., did not return several calls and emails seeking comment. It has yet to respond to the complaint in court.

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