

Pizza Hut franchisee: lawsuit lacks merit

Kansas City, MO. - - Responding to a lawsuit claiming it pays its delivery drivers less than minimum wage, Pizza Hut franchisee NPC International said its pay equals or exceeds federal and state standards.

In an answer filed Monday in federal court in Kansas City, Kan., the Overland Park-based company contended the suit “unfairly quantifies” its compensation by failing to include tips.

It also said that the plaintiffs never complained that NPC’s automobile expense reimbursements were insufficient, as the lawsuit alleges.

“NPC has at all times acted in good faith and complied with the federal and state laws governing plaintiffs’ employment,” the company stated in its answer.

“Plaintiffs’ amended complaint should be dismissed in its entirety and NPC should be awarded its attorneys’ fees, expenses, and costs incurred in defending this meritless action.”

NPC is the largest pizza hut franchisee in the world, with 1,161 Pizza Hut restaurants in 28 states, including Missouri and Kansas.

The lawsuit was filed earlier this year by Jeffrey Wass, an NPC delivery driver, individually and on behalf of other delivery drivers.

The suit, which was amended earlier this month, alleges that delivery drivers, though paid hourly wages roughly equal to applicable minimum-wage laws, are inadequately compensated for the actual costs of using their own vehicles to make pizza deliveries.

An attorney for Wass estimated that the suit, if certified by the court as a class action, could include up to 20,000 drivers.