

## 15 ex-Burbank Boy Scouts sue scouting organization

CHICAGO (AP) — Fifteen former Boy Scouts from the Chicago suburb of Burbank filed a lawsuit Wednesday alleging that the organization failed to protect them from a scout leader who was later convicted of molestation.

The lawsuit filed in Cook County Circuit Court names the Boy Scouts of America and the group's Chicago Area Council. It was filed by unnamed men — all referred to as "John Doe" — who were members of the same troop from 1980 until 1987. A 16th former scout sued late last year.

Lawyers said all 16 were sexually abused by Thomas Hacker when they were between the ages of 10 and 13 and that the Boy Scouts knew about previous abuse allegations against Hacker but allowed him to continue working with children.

Hacker, 76, was convicted in 1989 of molesting three boys and sentenced to two concurrent 50-year prison terms. When he was arrested in 1988, investigators said they thought Hacker had abused at least 34 children.

"These victims, and their parents, placed their trust and confidence in the Boy Scouts, and the Scouts let them down," attorney Chris Hurley said in a statement. "When abuse was reported, BSA turned its back and not only ignored the victims, but continued to let Hacker snake through the system."

Boy Scouts of America said in a statement Wednesday that it hadn't seen the lawsuit.

"We deeply regret that there have been times when

Scouts were abused, and for that we are very sorry and extend our deepest sympathies to victims. ... In the 30 years since these events took place, (the BSA) has continuously enhanced its multi-tiered policies and procedures, which now include background checks, comprehensive training programs, and safety policies, like requiring all members to report even suspicions of abuse directly to local law enforcement."

Documents show that Boy Scouts had a confidential file on Hacker in 1970 based on reports that he'd been arrested in Indiana for sexually assaulting boys in scouting and at a school where he taught. The arrest led to a felony conviction, yet Hacker resurfaced as a scoutmaster in the Chicago suburbs in 1971 and by the end of that year had been arrested again.

Hurley said Hacker moved from council to council over two decades.

Court documents say the men had repressed memories and came forward after information about Hacker resurfaced after the Oregon Supreme Court ordered the public release of 14,500 pages of secret files, which showed the organization had long sought to protect its reputation by shielding scoutmasters and others accused of molesting children.

Those files are a window on a much larger collection of documents the Boy Scouts of America began collecting soon after its founding in 1910. The files contain details about proven molesters, as well as unsubstantiated allegations.