

Whistle-blower files claim against FAA

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DALLAS

An air traffic controller who told authorities that the Federal Aviation Administration covered up safety issues at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport has filed a discrimination claim charging the agency with refusing to promote her because of her complaints.

Anne Whiteman is seeking \$800,000 in damages in the claim filed Sunday with a federal board that handles retaliation claims.

Whiteman said air traffic controllers at the Texas airport sometimes let planes get too close to each other, then covered up the safety issues by blaming the incidents on pilot error or saying they never happened.

Whiteman, who has worked at the airport for more than 25 years, first reported the safety issue to superiors in 1998. She said in the claim that she was removed from her job in the radar room in a move widely considered a demotion, and continually denied advancement. She also said she was subject to harassment including an attempt to run her car off the road.

The FAA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The claim was filed with the Dallas office of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

The Transportation Department's inspector general and the Office of Special Counsel, a federal agency that protects whistle-blowers, backed up Whiteman's complaints. They said the problem of falsely classifying incidents when aircraft got too close to each other was eight times greater at DFW than at other airports nationwide.

The inspector general recommended that seven FAA managers at DFW Airport be removed, and last week an FAA spokeswoman said that had been done.

The special counsel also wrote to President George W. Bush and congressional leaders about the issue last week.