

COMPANY NEWS; METLIFE PLANS TO TAKE \$250 MILLION CHARGE

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MetLife Inc. said yesterday that it would take a \$250 million pretax charge against earnings to cover costs stemming from class-action lawsuits and an investigation into accusations of race discrimination. The lawsuits accuse MetLife's Metropolitan Life Insurance Company of charging black customers higher premiums than it charged whites. The New York State Insurance Department is investigating the claims. The charge will be taken in the fourth quarter of 2001. MetLife, which is based in New York, will release its earnings on Tuesday. It has denied the charges, and a spokesman said the announcement did not represent an about-face. "We are making an accounting announcement," a MetLife spokesman, Kevin Foley, said.