U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

PRESS RELEASE
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EEOC Sues Newport News Industrial Corporation for Unlawful Retaliation

Company Terminated Employee for Complaining about Gender Discrimination, Federal Agency Charged

WILMINGTON, N.C. - Newport News Industrial Corporation violated federal law by firing a female employee after she complained about being subjected to a hostile work environment because of her gender, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed today. Newport News Industrial Corporation is headquartered in Newport News, Va., and provides a wide range of services and products to the energy and petrochemical industries, as well as government entities, such as NASA, the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense.

According to the EEOC's suit, Newport News Industrial Corporation hired Julia Horton on Sept. 27, 2010 as a planner to assist with a nuclear plant outage at the Brunswick Nuclear Power Plant in Southport, N.C. Around Nov. 15, Horton initially complained about the site superintendent treating her in an aggressive, intimidating, sarcastic and condescending manner because of her gender. The company's vice president/general manager completed an investigation into Horton's complaints on Nov. 30. On Dec. 2, 17 days after her initial complaint, and two days after the company's VP completed his investigation, Horton was fired. The EEOC alleged this was in retaliation for her complaints about gender-based discrimination.


The EEOC seeks back pay, compensatory damages and punitive damages for Horton as well as injunctive relief.

"Employers must understand that employees cannot be forced to make a choice between complaining about what they reasonably believe to be discrimination and retaining their jobs," said Lynette A. Barnes, regional attorney for the EEOC's Charlotte District Office. "This lawsuit sends a message that the EEOC will not allow employers to retaliate against employees for exercising their legal right to oppose discrimination in the workplace.”

Eliminating policies and practices that discourage or prohibit individuals from exercising their rights under employment discrimination statutes, or that impede the EEOC's investigative or enforcement efforts, is one of six national priorities identified by the agency's Strategic Enforcement Plan.

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws against employment discrimination. Further information is available at www.eeoc.gov