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News Release  

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Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory settles race and sex discrimination case with US Labor Department

Two former employees will receive nearly $360K in back wages and damages

BALTIMORE — The Applied Physics Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University will pay $359,253 to settle allegations of discrimination made by two African American women who were employed at its Laurel, Md. facility. An investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs determined that the lab violated Executive Order 11246, which prohibits federal contractors from discriminating in employment on the basis of race or sex.

"All workers deserve to be treated fairly, and when they are not, they should be able to report it without fear of being harassed or retaliated against," said OFCCP Director Patricia A. Shiu. "I am pleased that we were able to achieve a fair and just remedy for these two women and to ensure that the laboratory removes barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace."

OFCCP's investigation began in June 2010, after an African American woman filed a complaint alleging that she had been subjected to a hostile work environment at the APL. When she tried to pursue a complaint through the lab's own equal employment opportunity process, she was harassed, retaliated against and, ultimately, fired. During its investigation, OFCCP received a second complaint in November 2010 from another African American woman alleging that she had been subjected to pay discrimination and a hostile work environment at the APL. OFCCP compliance officers found that the lab had indeed discriminated against the two former employees because of their race and because they engaged in protected equal employment opportunity activities.

The investigators also confirmed that the second employee was paid less than her similarly-situated male colleagues, and that the APL had subjected both women to a hostile work environment by retaliating against them for filing EEO complaints and by allowing them to be harassed. This retaliation culminated in the firing of one employee and the resignation of the other.

In addition to significant financial remedies it will pay to the affected women, the APL has agreed to revise its policies and procedures to eliminate harassment, intimidation, coercion or retaliation in its workplace. The lab will also ensure that its internal complaint process is free of undue influence and will post notices in English and Spanish to inform employees of their rights against employment discrimination. Finally, managers and employees with responsibilities for hiring, preparing performance plans, determining compensation or making transfer, promotion, or discharge decisions will be trained on all federal equal employment opportunity laws.

Johns Hopkins University and its associated hospital constitute the largest employer in Maryland. A division of the university, the APL supports national security, space science and other civilian research and development initiatives. From 2009 to 2014, the APL received more than $3.6 billion in taxpayer-funded federal contracts with agencies such as the U.S. Departments of Defense, Commerce and Homeland Security.

In addition to Executive Order 11246, OFCCP enforces Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Vietnam
Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974. Collectively, these three laws require contractors and subcontractors that do business with the federal government to prohibit discrimination and ensure equal opportunity in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and status as a protected veteran. For more information, please call OFCCP's toll-free helpline at 800-397-6251 or visit http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/.