Newport News Industrial Corporation Agrees to Pay $65,000 in EEOC Retaliation Lawsuit

Company Fired Employee for Complaining About Gender Discrimination, Federal Agency Charged

WILMINGTON, N.C. - Newport News Industrial Corporation has agreed to pay $65,000 and provide substantial injunctive relief to settle an employment discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the agency announced today. The EEOC said the company fired an employee because she complained she was being discriminated against based on her gender.

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, only 17 days after her initial complaint, and two days after the company's VP completed his investigation, Horton was fired. The EEOC charged that Horton was fired in retaliation for her complaints about gender-based discrimination.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which makes it illegal to retaliate against someone who complains about discrimination. The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Western Division (EEOC v. Newport News Industrial Corporation, Civil Action No. 7:13-cv-203-BO) after first attempting to reach a voluntary pre-litigation settlement through the agency's conciliation process.

In addition to providing monetary relief to Horton, the company entered into a three-year consent decree requiring it to provide annual training to all supervisors, managers, and employees, to prevent future retaliation. The company will also provide information to the EEOC about the names of employees who complained about discrimination, and who were thereafter subjected to an adverse employment action. The company will also post a notice to employees concerning their rights under the laws the EEOC enforces.

"Employers cannot punish employees who report discrimination," said Lynette A. Barnes, regional attorney for the EEOC's Charlotte District Office.

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.