

EEOC NEWS



U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

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EEOC FILES THREE RACIAL HARASSMENT LAWSUITS AGAINST PENNSYLVANIA AND WEST VIRGINIA EMPLOYERS

***Black Workers Were Subjected to Racial Epithets, Nooses, Intimidation With Firearms,
Federal Agency Charges***

PHILADELPHIA – Four companies, one in West Virginia and three in Pennsylvania, violated federal law by subjecting their Black employees to racially hostile work environments and other unlawful discrimination, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in three separate lawsuits filed today.

The EEOC filed the first racial harassment case against Coastal Drilling East, LLC (Coastal Drilling), a Pennsylvania-based company that provides geotechnical construction services in the natural gas industry. According to the lawsuit, an African American Rig Hand at Coastal Drilling's Graysville, Pennsylvania, site was subjected to severe racial harassment by his coworkers, including being handed a noose, open display of nooses on other occasions, and persistent use of racial epithets such as "n****r" in reference to himself and other Black persons. A direct supervisor tolerated and participated in some of the racial harassment, the EEOC said. Coastal Drilling was aware of the racial harassment in its workplace but failed to take action to stop it from occurring, eventually forcing the Black worker to resign his employment, the EEOC charged.

The EEOC filed the second racial harassment case against Eureka Stone Quarry, Inc. and James D. Morrissey Inc. (JDM), affiliated Pennsylvania-based companies engaged in mining and sales of sand, stone and other materials and construction operations. According to the lawsuit, an African American heavy equipment operator at the companies' quarry in Chalfont, Pennsylvania, was subjected to egregious racial harassment by coworkers for several years, including commonplace use of racial epithets such as "n****r," threats of violence directed at the Black Lives Matter movement, and other offensive statements that reflected racial bias and stereotypes. The racial harassment became increasingly severe over time and eventually culminated in the Black worker being threatened with firearms, including an incident in which one of the harassers fired multiple shots from a rifle on company property while the African

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American worker was nearby and not long after the Black worker had driven past him, the EEOC charged. Eureka Stone and JDM were aware of the racial harassment but failed to take action to stop it from occurring, thereby forcing the African American worker to resign his employment, according to the lawsuit.

The EEOC filed the third racial harassment case against UFP Ranson, LLC, a lumber manufacturer located in Jefferson County, West Virginia. UFP Ranson is a subsidiary of UFP Industries, Inc., a publicly traded corporation headquartered in Michigan with approximately 170 facilities worldwide. According to the lawsuit, UFP Ranson subjected a class of Black workers to severe racial harassment in the form of racial epithets such as “n****r,” other racially offensive statements, and, in at least one instance, threats of violence involving firearms. The EEOC also charged that a manager at UFP Ranson deliberately sought to force African American workers to quit their jobs, and the company created more onerous working conditions for Black workers relative to their White peers. One African American worker who is Muslim was also subjected to religious harassment and was eventually subjected to racially discriminatory and retaliatory discharge, according to the lawsuit. The EEOC said that UFP Ranson was aware of the racially hostile work environment at its facility but failed to take action to stop it. The EEOC’s lawsuit seeks relief for a class of current and former Black workers at Ranson’s West Virginia facility.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits racial harassment and other race discrimination in employment, as well as religious harassment and retaliation for opposing such practices or participating in Title VII proceedings. The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania (U.S. EEOC v. Coastal Drilling East, LLC, Civil Action No. 2:21-cv-01220-JFC); U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (U.S. EEOC v. Eureka Stone Quarry, Inc. & James D. Morrissey Inc., Civil Action No. 2:21-cv-04060); and U.S. District Court for the Northern District of West Virginia (U.S. EEOC v. UFP Ranson, LLC, Civil Action No. 3:21-cv-00149-GMG), after first attempting to reach pre-litigation settlements through its conciliation process.

“Some people say that workplace racism in the United States has become more subtle, more covert, and perhaps less common than it was in decades past,” said EEOC Regional Attorney Debra Lawrence. “But those of us who enforce federal anti-discrimination laws everyday know that on-the-job racial bigotry has not gone underground. Rather, it remains a pervasive problem that exists out in the open to be seen by anyone who bothers to look. The EEOC will not tolerate racial discrimination in employment and will continue its efforts to uncover and eradicate that stain on our national conscience.”

EEOC Philadelphia District Director Jamie Williamson said, “We Americans have just observed Labor Day, our annual national holiday that honors the contributions and dignity of workers. But to truly honor our workers, we must respect their legal rights every single day, including their right to be free from racial harassment and other forms of job discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 imposes a duty upon employers to exercise care each day to ensure that workers can perform their labor in an environment free from racial harassment, and the EEOC will be here to ensure that employers carry out that duty.”

The lawsuits were commenced by the EEOC’s Pittsburgh Area Office, one of four component offices of the agency’s Philadelphia District Office. The Philadelphia District Office has jurisdiction over Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and parts of New Jersey and Ohio. Attorneys in the Philadelphia District Office also prosecute discrimination cases in Washington, D.C. and parts of Virginia.

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The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at www.eeoc.gov. Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our [email updates](#).

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