



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

08-16-2023

Court Awards Over \$80,000 Dollars Against Coastal Drilling East, LLC and Coastal Well Service, LLC In EEOC Race Discrimination Lawsuit

Federal Court Jury Finds Oil and Gas Industry Companies Subjected Black Employee to Racial Harassment and Forced Resignation

PITTSBURGH - The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has won a victory in federal court in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in its employment discrimination lawsuit against Coastal Drilling East, LLC and Coastal Well Service, LLC, the federal agency announced today.

The EEOC originally filed the racial harassment case against Coastal Drilling East, LLC (Coastal Drilling), a Pennsylvania-based company that provides geotechnical construction services in the oil and natural gas industry, on September 13, 2021. According to the lawsuit, a Black employee 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.

Such conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits racial harassment and forced resignation from employment because of race. The EEOC originally filed suit against Defendant Coastal Drilling East, LLC in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania (U.S. EEOC v. Coastal Drilling East, LLC & Coastal Well Service, LLC, Civil Action No. 2:21-cv-01220-JFC). Defendant Coastal Well Service, LLC was created after the Title VII violations committed in the case, and the EEOC subsequently added Coastal Well Service as a defendant in the lawsuit in its capacity as a successor-in-interest to the well services division of Coastal Drilling East.

On December 5, 2022, a unanimous eight-person federal jury in Pittsburgh found that Coastal Drilling East, LLC and Coastal Well Service, LLC violated federal law when they subjected a Black employee to racial harassment and forced resignation because of race. The federal jury returned a verdict in favor of EEOC, finding that the defendants violated the Black employee's rights under Title VII, and awarding him \$24,375 in compensatory damages for emotional distress. On August 16th, 2023, Senior U.S. District Judge Joy Flowers Conti subsequently entered an order requiring the defendants to pay the Black employee an additional \$56,093.62 in back pay and other relief for the Title VII violations found by the jury. The court also ordered a permanent injunction for a two-year period barring the defendants from engaging in or tolerating racial harassment and requiring them to implement other measures to prevent further violations of federal law.

"Nooses and racial slurs have no place in the workplace and construction sites are no exception," said EEOC Chair Charlotte A. Burrows. "Unfortunately, racial harassment remains a significant barrier to entry, retention, and advancement of people of color in the construction industry. The EEOC is committed to doing its part to ensure that all workers are able to join and thrive in this critically important industry."

EEOC Philadelphia Regional Attorney Debra M. Lawrence said, "The jury's verdict and resulting judgment against the defendants in this case should serve as a stark warning to all employers that the EEOC and the American people will not tolerate racial harassment and other forms of race discrimination in the workplace, and that

juries and courts award sizeable damages to victims in these cases.”

“Every employee has the right to be free from racial slurs and other racial harassment in the workplace,” added EEOC District Director Jamie R. Williamson. “Employers cannot ignore such harassment; they must make diligent efforts to stop it. If they fail to do so, EEOC will act forcefully to require their compliance with federal law.”

For more information on race and color discrimination, please visit

<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination>). For more information on harassment, please visit **<https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment>)**.

The lawsuit was initiated 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 portions of New Jersey and Ohio. Attorneys in the Philadelphia District Office also prosecute discrimination cases in Washington, D.C. and portions of Virginia.

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at **www.eeoc.gov (<https://www.eeoc.gov>)**. Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our **[email updates](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new) (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new>)**.