



**U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

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**Press Release**

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# **Exxon Mobil Corporation Sued by EEOC for Race Discrimination**

Petrochemical Company Failed to Protect Worker From Harassment After Nooses Were Displayed in Its Baton Rouge Complex, Federal Agency Charges

BATON ROUGE, La. – Exxon Mobil Corporation, doing business as ExxonMobil Chemical Corporation, violated federal law when it failed to take effective measures to prevent the display of hangman’s nooses at its Baton Rouge complex, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed on March 2, 2023.

According to the EEOC’s lawsuit, a Black employee at ExxonMobil’s chemical plant found a hangman’s noose at his worksite in January 2020. At the time he reported the noose, ExxonMobil was aware that three other nooses had been displayed at the Baton Rouge complex, consisting of the chemical plant and a nearby refinery. The EEOC alleges that ExxonMobil investigated some, but not all, of the prior incidents and failed to take measures reasonably calculated to end the harassment.

After the employee reported the noose in January, a fifth noose was reported in December 2020 at the complex. ExxonMobil’s actions and omissions regarding the noose incidents created a racially hostile work environment, the EEOC said.

Racially harassing conduct that alters the terms and conditions of the workplace violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race. The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana (Civil Action No. 23-159) after first trying to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process.

“When employers become aware of racially offensive or threatening conduct in the workplace, they have a legal obligation to take prompt, remedial action aimed at stopping it,” said Rudy Sustaita, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Houston District Office.

Michael Kirkland, director of the EEOC’s New Orleans Field Office, added, “Even isolated displays of racially threatening symbols are unacceptable in American workplaces.”

Elizabeth Owen, a senior trial attorney in the EEOC’s New Orleans Field Office, explained, “A noose is a longstanding symbol of violence associated with the lynching of African Americans. Such symbols are inherently threatening and significantly alter the workplace environment for Black Americans.”

The lawsuit was commenced by the EEOC’s New Orleans Field Office, which is part of its Houston District Office, which has jurisdiction over Louisiana and parts of Texas.

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov) (<http://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).