



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

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**Press Release**

04-03-2023

# **EEOC Sues Sandia Transportation for Harassment of Female Employees**

Owner Harassed Female Workers Based on Sex and Sexual Orientation, Federal Agency Charges

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – Sandia Transportation LLC (Sandia), a non-emergency medical transportation company with its principal place of business in Albuquerque, New Mexico, violated federal law by subjecting several female transportation workers to illegal harassment based on their sex and sexual orientation, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit it filed on Friday.

According to the EEOC, Sandia subjected female employees to harassment because of their sex, because they were lesbians, or because they did not fit management's idea of femininity. In fact, the owner of the company expressed that he did not believe female employees belonged in the workplace. Sandia's owner also subjected a group of female employees to severe or pervasive harassment, calling them "f\*ckin' lesbians" and telling each of them "women like [them] would be killed in [his] country." The owner often referred to women as "fat ugly bitches," "dumb," "stupid," "lazy," and "ignorant," and he frequently told everyone, "I hate f\*ckin'

dealing with women!” On March 24, 2017, Sandia’s owner announced to the office that “All the lesbians are fired!”

This alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The EEOC filed suit, *EEOC v. Sandia Transportation, LLC*, Civil Action No. 1:23-cv-00274-KRS-GJF, in U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico after first attempting to reach a settlement through its pre-litigation conciliation process. The lawsuit seeks compensatory and punitive damages for the four women, as well as appropriate injunctive relief to prevent discriminatory practices in the future.

“Federal law requires employers to act promptly to protect employees who are harassed on the basis of their sexual orientation or sex,” said EEOC Phoenix District Regional Attorney Mary Jo O’Neill. “Failing to do so not only violates federal law, but also encourages more illegal harassment. An owner telling employees that people like them are killed in his former country invokes a fear of violence for lesbian employees in the workplace.”

“All employers must protect against harassment of employees based on their sexual orientation or because of their gender,” said Melinda Caraballo, deputy director of the EEOC’s Phoenix District Office. “To do otherwise creates a hostile work environment for these employees.”

More information about sex discrimination is available at [\*\*https://www.eeoc.gov/sex-based-discrimination\*\*](https://www.eeoc.gov/sex-based-discrimination) ([\*\*https://www.eeoc.gov/sex-based-discrimination\*\*](https://www.eeoc.gov/sex-based-discrimination)). More information about sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination is available at [\*\*https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-discrimination\*\*](https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-discrimination) ([\*\*https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-discrimination\*\*](https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-discrimination)). The EEOC’s Phoenix District Office has jurisdiction for Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and part of New Mexico.

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\*\*](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\*\*](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new)).