

COURT FORCES COMPANY TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES TO PREVENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT ITS WORKPLACE



Whenever we read about sexual harassment cases it is usually women who are on the receiving end of male misconduct, but what if the shoe is on the other foot. A male worker, soon after his wife's death, began to receive lewd love notes from a female co-worker who wrote that he turned her on. She would make passes at him and wanted to go out with him. He asked the woman to stop harassing him as he was just not interested but she continued, to the extent that she sent him a sexually explicit picture of herself. Complaints to the supervisors brought promises and assurances of action, but nothing was done. This perhaps emboldened the lady further and she wrote to him that she was great at giving a "good bath wash and body massage." Nobody took his complaints seriously, so much so that one supervisor said that he did not want to involve himself in personal matters, whilst another said that it was too funny to be taken seriously and he should strut around singing "I'm too sexy for my shirt." Worse was to follow, his coworkers taunted him for not being man enough to meet the woman's passions, whilst others spread hearsay that he was a homosexual. The continuous pestering got to him. From being an outstanding worker, his work began to suffer and he was eventually fired from his job. He filed a case, alleging that he was subjected to a sexually hostile work environment and the court agreed that was indeed the case. The company knew that it did not address the problem when it should have and prudently decide to settle off court and had to cough up \$75,000. However, the company was also pulled for its failure to agree to adopt measures to prevent sexual harassment in the future. This denial forced the EEOC to petition the district court for an injunction. A federal judge then ordered the company, Prospect Airport Services, Inc., to put into practice widespread measures to prevent sexual harassment at their workplace. The court ordered that the company must develop and adopt EEOC policy and procedures when sexual harassment cases are brought to them, they must then have a system by which the cases can be thoroughly investigated, the guilty have to be appropriately disciplined and all supervisory employees must get sexual harassment training. Not only with this impact Prospect's 4000 odd employees, they will also have the EEOC monitoring their activities. Where the company went wrong and paid heavily for was by taking the matter lightly, failing to stop the advances, by not having a coherent and effective sexual harassment policy and by not disciplining the accused. Anna Y. Park, regional attorney for the EEOC's Los Angeles District Office said that the court's decision has sent a strong message to all employers that it is crucial for them to have effectual policies and measures in place to avoid discrimination in the workplace. She said that a workable policy would include a tough policy, effectual instruction and speedy action against violators. She said, "The judge's order will go a long way toward protecting Prospect's employees from harassment." Even though more women than men are sexually harassed at the workplace, 16 percent of the harassment charges that the EEOC received last year were from men. Adriana Lopez, acting local director for the EEOC's Las Vegas Local Office, "The law protects both men and women from sexual harassment at work, and it is the employer's obligation to actively prevent and correct such problems as they arise in the workplace."