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Kennedale air conditioning firm sued in sexual harassment case

ARTICLE COMMENTS

BY DARREN BARBEE
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A top manager at Hobson Air Conditioning is accused of making unwanted sexual comments, requesting sexual favors and exposing himself to the only woman then working at the company's Kennedale facility, according to a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

"Because of the continuing unwanted sexual conduct and management's failure to stop the harassment, [the woman] was forced to resign her job," according to the federal lawsuit, filed late last week.

Hobson officials could not be reached for comment. Federal records did not list an attorney for the company, which also has facilities in Weatherford and Lewisville.

According to the EEOC, the woman worked in Kennedale in December 2007. The woman's manager was the installation manager at the facility, according to the lawsuit.

The woman objected to the manager's conduct, which included making sexually "vulgar comments and touches," including repeatedly asking her to show her breasts, according to an EEOC news release. The manager ignored her protests, according to a news release and court documents.

The woman also notified Hobson management, "yet no action was taken sufficient to stop the unwelcome sexual behavior or to discipline" the manager, the lawsuit alleges.

The woman's private attorney could not be reached for comment.

Devika Seth, EEOC trial attorney, said she didn't know whether the woman had filed criminal charges against the man for exposing himself to her. Kennedale police said they had no record of such a complaint.

"It is unacceptable and illegal for a company to subject its employees to continuous and unwelcome sex-based comments and conduct and, when complaints are made, to fail to act," Seth said. "A company this size should have the knowledge and resources to effectively handle complaints of sexual harassment. In this case, the company failed in its duty to comply with the law."

The EEOC is seeking back pay, compensatory and punitive damages for the woman.

DARREN BARBEE, 817-390-7126

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