



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

05-09-2024

NorVal Electric to Pay \$50,000 in EEOC Sexual Harassment and Retaliation Lawsuit

Settles Federal Charges the Power Company's Former General Manager Sexually Harassed and Retaliated Against His Subordinate

GLASGOW, Mont. – NorVal Electric Cooperative, Inc., a utility serving Northeast Montana, agreed to pay \$50,000 to a former employee and provide other injunctive relief to resolve a sexual harassment and retaliation lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency announced today.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, NorVal's office manager faced unwelcome sexual comments and physical touching from her direct supervisor, the utility's then-general manager. The conduct escalated during a business trip when he suggested that they meet in his hotel room, which she adamantly refused. When she sought to report his conduct, he made escalating threats against her job, and NorVal blocked her from complaining to anyone other than her harasser, the EEOC said.

Such conduct violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace as well as retaliating against an employee for

opposing harassment. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. NorVal Electric Cooperative, Inc., Case No. 4:19-cv-00071-BMM) in U.S. District Court for the District of Montana, Great Falls Division, after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its administrative conciliation process.

Under the three-year consent decree settling the suit, NorVal will pay \$50,000 in punitive damages – the maximum available by statute for an employer of NorVal’s size – to the former employee. The decree also requires that the company retain an independent consultant to assist NorVal in developing anti-discrimination policies and procedures, receive and independently and confidentially investigate any complaints of sexual harassment and/or retaliation, and recommend appropriate corrective action to remedy any complaints of discrimination or retaliation.

In addition, NorVal must designate multiple points of contact for complaints and implement companywide anti-discrimination training. It is further barred from employing the harasser in any capacity.

“Forcing a person to report harassment to her harasser runs contrary to business sense and best practice,” said Elizabeth M. Cannon, director of the EEOC’s Seattle Field Office. “It is vital for employers to have robust policies and procedures that provide employees safe options to report harassment without fear of retaliation. This settlement sends a clear message that employers must protect their employees from harassment.”

EEOC Senior Trial Attorney Amos Blackman said, “This harasser tried to put himself above the law, and it took incredible courage for this employee to come forward. I hope this settlement brings her some measure of relief.”

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

The EEOC’s Seattle Field Office has jurisdiction over Washington, Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana.

The EEOC prevents and remedies unlawful employment discrimination and advances equal opportunity for all. More information is available at 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>).

Recent Press Releases from the Seattle Field Office

[Red Robin Pagará 600.000 Dólares a la EEOC por Demanda por Acoso Sexual \(https://www.eeoc.gov/es/newsroom/red-robin-pagara-600000-dolares-la-eeoc-por-demanda-por-acoso-sexual\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/es/newsroom/red-robin-pagara-600000-dolares-la-eeoc-por-demanda-por-acoso-sexual)

[Red Robin to Pay \\$600,000 in EEOC Sexual Harassment Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/red-robin-pay-600000-eeoc-sexual-harassment-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/red-robin-pay-600000-eeoc-sexual-harassment-lawsuit)

[Red Robin to Pay \\$600,000 in EEOC Sexual Harassment Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/red-robin-pay-600000-eeoc-sexual-harassment-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/red-robin-pay-600000-eeoc-sexual-harassment-lawsuit)

Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Sexual Harassment, Retaliation

[The Cleaning Authority-Fox Valley to Pay \\$200,000 to Settle EEOC Sexual Harassment and Retaliation Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/cleaning-authority-fox-valley-pay-200000-settle-eeoc-sexual-harassment-and-retaliation\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/cleaning-authority-fox-valley-pay-200000-settle-eeoc-sexual-harassment-and-retaliation)

[Chipotle to Pay \\$50,000 in EEOC Sexual Harassment Case \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/chipotle-pay-50000-eeoc-sexual-harassment-case\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/chipotle-pay-50000-eeoc-sexual-harassment-case)

[Erie Construction to Pay \\$99,000 to Settle EEOC Sex Discrimination and Retaliation Suit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/erie-construction-pay-99000-settle-eeoc-sex-discrimination-and-retaliation-suit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/erie-construction-pay-99000-settle-eeoc-sex-discrimination-and-retaliation-suit)