

# News Release



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## **Harahan, La., Company Settles Labor Department Discrimination Case, Agrees to Pay Back Wages to Minority Applicants**

**NEW ORLEANS** -- Universal Sodexho in Harahan, La., has entered into a settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to resolve the department's findings of hiring discrimination against 4,465 minority applicants at its Harahan facility. The company will pay a total of \$788,877 in back wages, including interest, to the rejected applicants, most of whom are black.

During a routine investigation, OFCCP found that Universal Sodexho failed to uniformly apply selection criteria to applicants without regard to race. Following an in-depth evaluation of the company's hiring practices, OFCCP determined that minorities applying for offshore utility, steward and night cook positions were unlawfully screened out by the company's hiring practices. Universal Sodexho, a contractor of the U.S. Department of Defense, provides catering and support services for remote sites such as oil rigs and drilling platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Employers are encouraged to take proactive steps to prevent workplace discrimination," said Fred Azua Jr., director for OFCCP's Southwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Office. "Universal Sodexho worked with OFCCP to achieve voluntary compliance to remedy the department's findings."

Under the terms of the agreement, the company will compensate the rejected minority applicants. In addition, Universal Sodexho will hire 109 of the rejected minority applicants for its Harahan facility. The company also has agreed to train employees involved in the hiring selection process and restructure the process to enhance equal employment opportunity. While agreeing to the terms of the settlement, the company did not admit liability.

The OFCCP is an agency of the U.S. Labor Department's Employment Standards Administration, which enforces Executive Order 11246 and other laws that prohibit employment discrimination by federal contractors. The agency monitors federal contractors to ensure that they provide equal employment opportunity without regard to race, gender, color, religion, national origin, disability or veteran status.

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