



News Release

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Hickory Springs Manufacturing in Fort Smith, Ark., agrees to pay 148 rejected female applicants \$75,000 to remedy hiring discrimination

FORT SMITH, Ark. — The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) today announced that the Hickory Springs Manufacturing Co. in Fort Smith, Ark., has entered into a conciliation agreement to settle findings of the department's allegations that the company engaged in hiring discrimination against 148 female applicants.

"Federal contractors are encouraged to conduct self-audits and examine employment processes to ensure there are no impediments to equal employment opportunity," said Joan Sessoms Ford, acting director for OFCCP's Southwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Office. "This settlement of \$75,000 on behalf of these female applicants should put contractors on notice that the Labor Department is serious about eliminating systemic discrimination."

OFCCP investigators found that 148 female applicants were disproportionately eliminated from the positions of paintline operator and assembler/bed builder over a two-year period as compared to similarly-situated male applicants.

Under the terms of the conciliation agreement, Hickory Springs Manufacturing will pay 148 female applicants a total of \$75,000 in back pay and interest, and hire 20 women for entry-level production positions. Additionally, the company has agreed to undertake extensive self-monitoring measures to ensure that all hiring practices fully comply with the law, immediately correct any discriminatory practices and comply with the required recordkeeping provisions.

Hickory Springs Manufacturing, headquartered in Hickory, N.C., distributes metal components and sleeper mechanisms for contract, industrial and consumer markets. The company has contracts with the Department of Justice, Federal Prison Industries/UNICOR, which includes manufacturing components for bedding used by the federal prison system. The company was cooperative during the review and subsequent conciliation.

OFCCP, an agency of the Department of Labor's Employment Standards Administration, 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 opportunities without regard to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, disability or veteran status.

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