

PRESS RELEASE

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AUTOZONE, INC. TO PAY \$65,000 FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT; EEOC SECURES UNANIMOUS JURY VERDICT

PHOENIX – An eight person federal jury has returned a unanimous verdict in favor of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in a sexual harassment lawsuit against AutoZone, Inc., the Memphis, Tenn.-based national auto parts retail giant, the EEOC announced today.

The jury ruled that AutoZone violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by subjecting employee Stacy Wing to a sexually hostile work environment. Wing complained about the sex harassment, but AutoZone failed to take immediate and appropriate action to stop it, the EEOC said. The jury verdict in favor of the EEOC provides Wing with \$65,000 in compensatory and punitive damages.

The evidence presented at trial by the EEOC showed that Wing was subjected to egregious sexual harassment when she worked at the Mesa, Ariz.-based AutoZone in 2003. The EEOC presented evidence that the store manager repeatedly forced Wing's head down to his genitals and made crude sexual remarks to her. At least one incident was caught on the store's video camera, but AutoZone maintained it lost the video prior to trial, along with all records of Wing's complaints and the "investigation" AutoZone claims it conducted.

"I am grateful to the EEOC for believing in this case and seeking justice on my behalf," Wing said after the trial. "Without the EEOC, this type of behavior would go unchecked by those employers who do not care or do not understand how devastating sexual harassment can be to someone's life."

The jury found that the sexual harassment of Wing violated Title VII, the federal statute that prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual harassment) and national origin, and protects employees who complain about such offenses, or participate in investigations of such offenses, from retaliation.

EEOC Phoenix District Director Chester V. Bailey said, "The jury sent a strong message that AutoZone failed to remedy the sexual harassment of Ms. Wing. The lawyers from our office did outstanding work in litigating this case."

In Fiscal Year 2008, 32,535 total harassment charges were filed with the EEOC and state or local agencies nationwide. Of that total 13,867 charges alleged sexual harassment, an increase of 11 percent from the prior year and the highest level since FY 2002.

EEOC Regional Attorney Mary Jo O'Neill remarked, "No employee should ever be the target of this kind of illegal behavior. AutoZone had the opportunity to stop the sexual harassment when Ms. Wing reported it, but the company did nothing. As a result of AutoZone's inaction, Ms. Wing was physically assaulted by the store manager, which was ultimately caught on video tape. Even then, AutoZone just let the store manager resign; AutoZone failed Stacy Wing."

David Lopez, the EEOC's lead attorney who tried the case, added, "It is the bravery of women like Stacy Wing who step forward that causes positive changes in the workplace. We are pleased that Ms. Wing obtained justice in this case."

According to the company's web site, "AutoZone is the nation's leading retailer and a leading distributor of automotive replacement parts and accessories with more than 4,200 stores in the US, Puerto Rico, and Mexico."

The EEOC enforces federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. Further information about the EEOC is available on its web site at www.eeoc.gov.

The EEOC's Phoenix District Office has jurisdiction for Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and part of New Mexico (including Albuquerque).