

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, February 5, 1998

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Astra USA Agrees To Provide \$10 Million To Victims Of Discrimination

* * * Largest in Agency History * * *

BOSTON -- Astra USA Inc., a pharmaceutical firm headquartered in Westborough, Massachusetts, with offices throughout the United States, will pay \$9,850,000 plus interest to settle a sexual harassment lawsuit filed by the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The Complaint and a Consent Decree signed by the parties were filed today with The United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts. The settlement also provides for, among other things, the administration of all monetary claims, monitoring of Astra's compliance with its policy prohibiting sexual harassment, and training for all managers, supervisors and salespersons on recognizing and preventing sexual harassment in the workplace.

The EEOC's Chairman Paul Igasaki announced that this is the largest settlement of a sexual harassment lawsuit in the agency's history. Chairman Igasaki stated, "Our settlement insures that employees at Astra USA will be free of a sexually hostile work environment and that employees and former employees will be compensated. This is an important resolution not only because of the amount of the compensation but also because of the cooperation between Astra and the EEOC in reaching this agreement. I hope that other employers will follow Astra USA's lead in taking the necessary steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and provide a remedy for those who have been victims of discrimination."

In its lawsuit, filed in the United States District Court, EEOC alleged that Astra violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, by maintaining a sexually hostile work environment and retaliating against employees who reported or objected to such behavior. The EEOC's investigation revealed that at least since January 1993, Astra's management officials, including former President Lars Bildman, subjected the charging parties and other similarly situated female employees to a hostile work environment and in some instances, quid pro quo harassment. All of the charging parties were employed by Astra as sales representatives.

Under the terms of the Consent Decree Astra has agreed to place the \$9,850,000 in an interest-bearing account which will result in a fund of more than \$10 million dollars for eligible claimants. A Special Master, selected jointly by the EEOC and Astra, will administer a claims fund. Eligible claimants will be notified of the settlement and given an opportunity to apply for monetary relief. All money in the claims fund will be allocated to victims of discrimination and Astra will pay all fees and expenses of the Special Master. Eligible claimants are those individuals who were employed by Astra USA between January 1, 1993 and the entry of the Consent Decree, and who submit credible evidence that subsequent to January 1, 1993, they were subjected to a hostile work environment because of their sex and/or were forced or pressured to cover up sexual harassment.

EEOC enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin; the Equal Pay Act; prohibitions against discrimination affecting individuals with disabilities in the federal sector; sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in the private sector and state and local governments; and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act. # # #

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