

When EEOC knocks: Must-dos for employers

Even experienced and sophisticated executives often react with dread when they receive a notice from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or another human rights agency informing them that an employee or former employee has accused the company of discrimination.

The country's laws against discrimination give a forum to employees who believe their employers have discriminated against them.

The employee's first step is to file a discrimination charge. About 80,000 discrimination charges are filed each year with the EEOC alone; more than 30 percent involve race discrimination. Recently, allegations of discrimination based on religion, national origin and age have increased dramatically.

Many claims are also filed with state and local human rights agencies, such as the Maryland Commission on Human Relations or the D.C. Office of Human Rights.

Local jurisdictions, including Montgomery, Prince George's, Fairfax and Arlington counties and Alexandria, have similar offices with work-sharing arrangements between the EEOC and state or local agencies.

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