



EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

Statement on Hazardous Substances
and Equal Employment Opportunity

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission believes that the objectives of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, to eliminate employment discrimination comport with the objectives of those laws designed to assure a workplace free of conditions that threaten the health or safety of employees.

Employers have at times undertaken employment practices or policies that adversely affect the economic opportunities of women of childbearing capacity and others protected by Title VII, by excluding them from jobs involving exposure to allegedly hazardous substances.

The Commission's chief concern is that employers, in seeking to meet their responsibilities to assure a secure workplace free of risk to the health or safety of employees, do so without treating women and men unequally because of their sex and without violating the rights of individuals to retain or compete for jobs or promotions without regard to race, sex, national origin, religion or color. Exclusionary employment actions taken hastily or without regard for rigorous adherence to acceptable scientific processes may be viewed as unlawful discrimination. Further, the Commission urges employers to make sure that such exclusionary practices not be instituted without making a serious effort to find alternative methods with a less exclusionary impact.

To promote the more efficient administration of these laws, therefore, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in coordination with all agencies concerned, has joined in an examination of these issues with a view to providing more explicit guidance. Pending this examination EEOC will continue the vigorous enforcement of Title VII as to all employment practices or policies that unlawfully exclude women of childbearing capacity and any other persons from the workplace or otherwise adversely affect the economic opportunities of any individuals protected by Title VII.

On April 4, 1978, at a duly announced meeting of the Commission, Vice Chair Leach moved that the Commission approve the foregoing statement.

Commissioner Walsh seconded the motion, which was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

Voting in the affirmative: Chair Norton, Vice Chair Leach, Commissioner Walsh.

April 21, 1978
(Seal)

Marie D. Wilson

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Executive Officer
Executive Secretariat