

Oscar Mayer worker launches sexual harassment claim, alleging years of abuse at the food production giant's Somerset factory

A woman who worked for three years at Oscar Mayer has launched legal action claiming she was subjected to constant, targeted sexual harassment and threatening behaviour by a senior supervisor whose unrelenting abuse went unaddressed by the company despite complaints.

Marie Nebesarova, (53), alleges she was harassed and threatened by Oscar Mayer supervisor Mark Arnold, who also intervened with Staffline, the recruitment firm that hired her, to prevent her from securing a permanent employment contract after she refused to have sex with him.

Nebesarova said: "I am still haunted by the experience of working at Oscar Mayer's Chard factory. I was sexually harassed for years by a senior supervisor, Mark Arnold, and neither Oscar Mayer nor Staffline did anything about it. When I asked for help, my hours were cut and the harassment and threats only intensified."

She added: "In the end I was told that they had no more work for me. I was so frightened for my safety that I moved half-way across the country, relying on welfare support to get by. My mental health and my financial stability collapsed. No one has ever admitted wrongdoing or sought to make amends despite my efforts to put them on notice about Mr Arnold for a long time."

Nebesarova is represented by international law firm McAllister Olivarius, which specialises in bringing justice to clients who have experienced discrimination or abuse. The firm is also exploring wider allegations of a culture of sexual harassment at the factory.

Honza Cervenka, lawyer for McAllister Olivarius, said: "Ms Nebesarova endured a campaign of sexual harassment, sexual advances and even job offers in exchange for sex from one of the factory's supervisors, Mark Arnold. Her case shines a stark light on the dark underbelly of many migrant-dependent industries. Companies like Oscar Mayer and Staffline, which heavily recruit short-term workers from abroad often with little to no fluency in English, must ensure a safe and harassment-free environment for all of their staff."

"We understand that the illegal harassment that Ms Nebesarova had to endure from Mr Arnold was not unique to her but part and parcel for many other women who worked in the factory."

Nebesarova claimed that Mark Arnold consistently arranged to take his breaks at the same time as her, that he repeatedly asked her where she lived and sought to drive her home after work or visit her and that he fantasised in front of colleagues about what he wanted to do to her sexually. She claimed that when she refused to have sex with him, Arnold first kept her from getting a permanent job at Oscar Mayer for which she had qualified, then told her he would make sure no employment agencies would give her a job. In fact, Staffline told Nebesarova that no more work was available for her at the plant, and she found it difficult to get work elsewhere in the country through Staffline despite having an excellent record at Oscar Mayer.

Nebesarova, who worked 12-hour shifts in food production and hygiene roles before her hours were repeatedly cut, claimed that she suffered a number of physical injuries while working in the Oscar Mayer factory as a result of unsafe working practices.

Notes for editors

McAllister Olivarius is an international law firm that specialises in representing victims of discrimination, harassment and other forms of mistreatment in their personal or professional lives.

Interviews: *Honza Cervenka, Nebesarova's chief lawyer, is available for interview. Audio visual material of Marie Nebesarova and Honza Cervenka is available.*

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