

Google parent Alphabet settles sexual misconduct lawsuit

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Google parent Alphabet is settling a lawsuit on sexual misconduct that eliminates a requirement for private arbitration of disputes

Alphabet on Friday announced moves to address sexual misconduct at Google and its other operating divisions, putting in place changes

worked out to settle a lawsuit filed by shareholders.

Under terms of the settlement, the internet giant will spend \$310 million on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and let employees use courts instead of private arbitration to resolve disputes over treatment.

"Over the past several years, we have been taking a harder line on inappropriate conduct, and have worked to provide better support to the people who report it," Alphabet vice president Eileen Naughton said in an email to workers.

"Protecting our workplace and culture means getting both of these things right, and in recent years we've worked hard to set and uphold higher standards for the whole company."

Shareholders filed a lawsuit against Alphabet early last year, not long after thousands of Google employees joined a coordinated worldwide walkout to protest the US tech giant's handling of sexual harassment.

The company has since implement policy changes and other steps to address concerns.

A practice instituted after the protests of not giving severance packages to executives fired for misconduct will be expanded to include those being looked at in pending investigations of sexual misconduct or retaliation claims, according to the settlement.

The shareholder lawsuit argued that Alphabet's board and [senior executives](#) improperly awarded multi-million-dollar severance packages to several male executives accused of sexually harassing [female employees](#), even after internal investigations found accusations to be credible.

The suit cited a \$90 million severance package given to Andy Rubin, considered the "father of Android" for his role in the creation of the widely used mobile operating system backed by Google.

The suit said that an internal investigation confirmed sexual harassment allegations against Rubin, who has consistently denied doing anything inappropriate.

Some demonstrators who streamed across the Mountain View campus during the walkout in late 2018 waved signs bearing messages such as "Happy to quit for \$90 million—no sexual harassment required."

The protest took shape after Google said that it had fired 48 employees in the previous two years—including 13 senior executives—as a result of allegations of [sexual misconduct](#).

The concerns at Google were part of a chorus of voices denouncing the existence of a sexist culture in male-dominated Silicon Valley.

In the email to employees, Naughton said Alphabet is setting up a diversity, equality and inclusion advisory council that will include members from outside the company, and outlined guiding principles being instituted.

Changes included refining Alphabet's policy about excessive drinking of alcohol at work-related events to curb chances of inappropriate behavior.

The settlement includes Google and Alphabet's "Other Bets" divisions which include the Waymo autonomous car unit and Verily life sciences initiative, among others.

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