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INSIGHTS

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NEWS FROM OSHA

Targeting injury-prone workplaces: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has distributed 14,000 letters notifying sites that their injury and illness rates exceed that of most workplaces. The letter encourages the recipients to work toward reducing hazards and protect their workers. OSHA plans to inspect approximately 1,000 of these sites.

To prevent injuries and illnesses, OSHA is encouraging these employers to consider hiring an outside safety and health consultant, to talk with their insurance carriers, or to contact the worker's compensation agency in their states for advice. They have also provided contact information for the free safety and health consultation service funded by OSHA in each state for small employers.

The identified sites had the highest lost workday injury and illness rates based on data received by OSHA last year. Each site had a minimum of eight injuries and illnesses resulting in lost workdays for every 100 full-time employees. The 14,000 sites are listed, by state, on OSHA's Web site at www.osha-slc.gov/as/opa/foia/hot_7.html.

Safety programs will help bottom line: New OSHA Administrator John Henshaw wants to sell small businesses on the idea that safety programs will help their bottom line. Henshaw claims, "It's good business." He plans to increase OSHA's compliance assistance, outreach and training programs, especially to small businesses. Henshaw hopes to collaborate with trade associations and safety professionals in this effort, suggesting they could "stimulate the market" for safety programs by providing some consultation services for free to businesses.

Though committed to strong and effective enforcement of OSHA regulations, Henshaw thinks increased compliance assistance efforts provide the best opportunity for reducing workplace injuries and illness. ■

Source: Dayton Business Journal

OCTOBER OCCASIONS

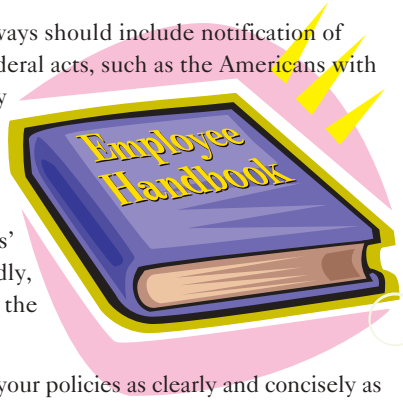
The National Association of Professional Organizers has dubbed the first week in October as "Get Organized Week." While you're getting organized, remember that October 28 marks the end of Daylight Saving Time…time to gain that hour back that you lost last spring. You can spend that extra hour in celebration by eating one of the following: pasta, pizza, popcorn, pork, and seafood…it's the national month for all of them. October 8 is Columbus Day and the 31st is Halloween. Safety-wise, October is National Fire Prevention Month and the second week is Fire Prevention week.



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Employee Handbooks

Writing an employee handbook may sound simple, but with the current labor law environment, you'll need to be especially careful about the wording to head off costly litigation. Here are some tips:



Federal law. The handbook always should include notification of employee rights granted by federal acts, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Medical Leave Act.

"Not a contract clause." Laws concerning issues such as employee benefits and workers' compensation can change rapidly, so include a clause stating that the handbook is not a contract.

Vague vs. specific language. State your policies as clearly and concisely as possible, yet don't box yourself into a predetermined course of action.

Address the tough issues. You may not want to mention issues such as injuries, death or sexual harassment, but in the absence of a statement of policy in the handbook, many courts currently are ruling in favor of the employee. ■

Source: Richard Shearrow, Employer Advantage



Send your comments to:

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Soap Box

Surburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them.
Bill Vaughan

Let not the sands of time get in your lunch.
Deteriorata

If the world should blow itself up, the last audible voice would be that of an expert saying it can't be done.
Peter Ustinov

Talk to a man about himself and he will listen for hours.
Benjamin Disraeli

One thing you can give and still keep is your word.
Anonymous

We can lick gravity, but sometimes the paperwork is overwhelming.
Wernher Von Braun

Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday.
Don Marquis

It's hard to be nostalgic when you can't remember anything.
Anonymous

Admiration: n: Our polite recognition of another's resemblance to ourselves.
The Devil's Dictionary

Give me the luxuries of life and I will willingly do without the necessities.
Frank Lloyd Wright

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.
Eleanor Roosevelt

It is never too late to become what we might have been.
George Eliot