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INSIGHTS

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CONGRESS ADDRESSES Y2K PROBLEMS

Congress has passed a bill that will set up a $500 million loan program to help small businesses fix their computers before the so-called millennium bug strikes on January 1, 2000. President Clinton must now sign it into law.

This bill would help employers around the country buy new computers or upgrade their old ones to eliminate the glitch, which could cause systems to crash or malfunction.

4.75 million small employers face Y2K problems.

Under the legislation, loans would also be made available to help small business owners if major suppliers, customers or creditors experience computer breakdowns.

A recent study by the National Federation of Independent Business found that 4.75 million small employers face Y2K problems. It warned that 750,000 of them could be forced to shut down or would be severely crippled if their computers were not fixed in time.

If signed, the bill would require the Small Business Administration to quickly establish a temporary Y2K loan program. The average loan would be for about $25,000, and would target firms with between 5 and 25 employees. ■

THE VOICE OF THE "NICE" CUSTOMER

"You know me. I'm a nice person. When I get lousy service, I never complain. I never kick. I never criticize and I wouldn't dream of making a scene.

I'm one of those nice customers. And, I'll tell you what else I am. I'm the customer who doesn't come back. I take whatever you hand out, because I know I'm not coming back. I could tell you off and feel better, but, in the long run, it's better just to leave quietly.

You see, a nice customer like me, multiplied by others like me, can bring a business to its knees. There are plenty of us. When we get pushed far enough we go to one of your competitors."

Celin-o-gram, Celina Group ■

OSHA SEEKS ADDITIONAL FUNDS

President Clinton's budget request for fiscal year 2000 calls for a $35.1 million increase in funds for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, including substantial increases to assist employers and employees to meet safety and health standards and to enforce those protections in the workplace.

The increase sought for OSHA includes $12.1 million for federal compliance assistance and $8.3 million for federal enforcement.

The enforcement component includes funds and additional personnel to support and strengthen activities in high-hazard work-places. It also provides money for establishing the capability for Alternative Dispute Resolution, which could provide an alternative solution to costly and time-consuming litigation over enforcement.

Poultry News, April 1999 ■



FAST FACTS ABOUT Y2K

- There have been 22 Y2K lawsuits filed.
- There have been 200 out-of-court Y2K settlements.
- IBM receives 1 million e-mails per week about Y2K issues.
- The first government hearing on Y2K was 3 years ago; since then, there have been 18 hearings.
- According to the Gartner Group, 65% of the companies worldwide will suffer a Y2K failure.
- The cost of government-wide repairs to fix the Y2K problem is almost $5.4 billion, according to the Office of Management and Budget.
- The Federal Trade Commission Y2K hotline got 50,000 calls during its first month.

PR News

EMPLOYEE MEAL AND BREAK TIMES: WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?

Requirements to provide breaks to employees generally come from state law. Approximately 26 states have laws requiring employee meal and break time, including Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington and West Virginia.

Federal law does not require employers to provide rest or meal breaks for employees.

Federal law does not require employers to provide rest or meal breaks for employees. In general, federal wage-hour law requires that rest periods of 20 minutes or less be counted as time worked under the minimum wage and overtime laws. Provided that the employee is relieved of duty, bona fide meal time of 30 minutes or more need not be counted as hours worked and not compensable. If you do not want to pay for breaks or meal times, be certain breaks are more than 20 minutes and meals are over 30 minutes.

Poultry News, February 1999 ■

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FDA Revisions for 1999

The Food and Drug Administration has released the most current version of the model Food Code that spells out FDA's best advice for a uniform system of regulation to ensure that food offered by retailers is safe, unadulterated and honestly presented. The code has been widely discussed and revised numerous times since 1971 by the Conference of Food Protection, a group which is comprised of state, federal and food industry representatives.

Significant changes include advice to vulnerable consumers about the possibility of contracting foodborne illness when animal-derived foods are undercooked or eaten raw. The prohibition against bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food was clarified to include a ban on artificial nails and fingernail polish, the increased display of hand washing signs and the use of automated facilities.

The 1999 Code also clarifies information about sanitizing and cleaning utensils used in food preparation and sets limits on date-marking and the timing of the introduction of additional foods into the container.

While the Code provides suggested food handling guidelines, some states have adopted its provisions as regulations. Other states are in the process of studying its mandated use.

American Association of Meat Processors

Questions about the most effective way to clean and sanitize meat processing plants? Call your ChemStation sales representative to learn more. ■



The Soap Box

As of last July, 10.1 million baby boomers turned 50. For the next 15 years, approximately 3 to 4 million boomers will cross the half-century mark until the youngest turn 50 in 2014. *U.S. Census Bureau*

In 1998, 45% of U.S. companies monitored employee e-mail, phone usage and computer files - up from 35% in 1997. *American Management Association*

The average household spends more on computer technology than on major appliances, lawn and gardening or housewares. *American Demographics*

In 1998, the U.S. generated $12.5 billion (79%) of total business-to-business e-commerce revenues. *Emarketer*

19% of grandmothers and 15% of grandfathers are under age 45. *U.S. Census Bureau*

Almost half of all Internet users first ventured online in 1998 and 12% of Americans go online every day. *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*

Originality is Overrated

"Make it a point to keep on the lookout for novel and interesting ideas that others have used successfully. Your idea has to be original only in its adaptation to the problem you are currently working on."

Thomas Edison ■

We Welcome Your Feedback!

What do you think of this customer newsletter, *Insights*? Does it address your needs? Are there issues you'd like to see us address? Send your comments to:

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