

HR as a Safety Issue

This is the time of year when we see what new laws are going to be signed by Governor Brown over the next few days. Of the 2,600 bills that were considered, 1,000 made it to his desk to be signed or rejected. I bet you didn't know our State was in such bad shape that we needed this many new laws and regulations to make it a better place.

Well, we do not have the results yet, so we will have to discuss these issues next month. Meanwhile, we are slowly turning to autumn or at least autumn the Central California way.

Along with the fall colors, we get fall weather. It is a good time to review certain safety issues with your employees regarding driving in the rain and fog. This is also a good time to go over your vehicles to ensure they are ready for the in climate weather.

Check windshield wipers and replace once a year. Check tire tread and the spare if you have one. Check brakes and don't forget to make sure all of your lights work. As it begins to get darker, earlier, you will be driving to work and home in the dark and need good headlights.

This all seems like simple things, but, as an employer you have a dual responsibility. An employee that gets into an accident affects work in many ways. Aside from the loss of productivity with an employee out with an injury or not able to get to work because their car broke down, you also may have a financial obligation.

Under certain circumstances, if an employee is injured while driving to work in a company vehicle, it may fall under your worker's compensation insurance coverage. Also, any errands an employee may be doing for the company is covered by worker's compensation as well as liability coverage.

Failure to cover safe driving with workers who use company vehicles may lead to Cal\OSHA violations if there is an accident. Also, all maintenance records must be up to date and documented. Driver safety should include driving under different weather and road conditions as well as proper procedures in the event of an accident. There should be a review of accident investigations, gathering of photos and witness statements and information and other issues.

We are still dealing with very warm weather, often up to the end of October. Cal\OSHA has been very active the past 2 months with field visits and they are aggressively addressing heat related injuries. It would be good to remind outside employees to follow the safety rules regarding heat illness and continue to stay hydrated.

Autumn is also the time of parties. What is your company policy regarding on and off-premise parties? Do you have designated drivers or a host that has arranged for transportation or hotel rooms? Is there a cut-off time for alcohol and are there appetizers available for people to eat later in the evening?

Planning is always important and the more you plan, the safer your holiday season will be. You cannot anticipate all issues, and I have only covered a few here, but we recommend you spend some time on this issue in September.

Here's hoping you all a safe and enjoyable fall.