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Issue Eleven

## Did You Know?



Having a pet can encourage you to get out and exercise. Exercise is good for overall health and stress management.

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## BLOG CORNER: Planning for a Rebound

Stay connected to Four Point HR. Post a response on this topic and others to our blog at [fourpointhr.com/peo](http://fourpointhr.com/peo).

Treasury officials are beginning to deliver cautiously optimistic news that we may be through the worst of our economic woes. Any good news is welcomed after months of difficulties. While none of us is likely to go out and gamble on large capital projects, it is important to begin preparing for greener pastures, especially with staff members. Making time with staff members over brown bag lunches or informal meetings to discuss how your business will rebound and what will be necessary to do so is critical. While we do not want to paint a false picture to our employees, we do want to let them know that the downturn cannot go on forever. Engage them in brainstorming sessions centered on how you can increase business without breaking your marketing budget. Consider offering referral fees to employees and customers for new business that they help bring in the door.

How are you planning for an economic rebound?



# H1N1 VIRUS - Protection In The Workplace

With the rapid increase in the number of cases of H1N1 Virus, or Swine Flu, the President has declared a National Emergency. This allows the Federal Government more power to assist states even though the announcement was not associated with any new developments. As employers, we are challenged by and responsible to initiate procedures that can reduce risks to our employees.

The H1N1 virus is easily spread from person to person through sneezing, coughing, or even talking. We cannot force an employee to use a tissue or wash his hands, but we can initiate several precautions in the workplace to help to minimize the spread of viruses. Consider the following:

- First and foremost, stay informed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have constant updates on their website at [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov).
- Keep plenty of soap, hand sanitizers and even wipes with bleach in the bathrooms and common areas including the lunchroom. Encourage the employees to utilize these while at work.
- Make sure every employee desk has a box of tissues.
- Instruct employees that they are required to immediately report to you, the employer, the contraction of a communicable disease. It is the employer's responsibility to take appropriate action to control the spread of the disease, which could include notifying public health authorities.
- Reassure your employees that you are interested in their health and that you have a commitment to your business and clients. If your company allows sick days, remind your staff to take advantage of the allowable time off. They should stay home when they are sick.
- With the new National Emergency classification, it may establish the H1N1 Virus as a qualifying event for the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). FMLA covers spouses and children and your employee will be eligible for the unpaid leave with a doctor's notification. Please note that only companies with 50 or more employees are required to provide FMLA.

Being informed and prepared is your best defense and will allow you to properly respond to situations that may arise in the workplace. Make sure to communicate what you learn to all employees. Together, you will build a safe and healthy environment.



# Holiday Season Workplace SAFETY

The holidays are quickly approaching and this is the busiest time of the year for employers and employees. During the holiday season, the risk for accidents and injuries increases mainly due to stress, distractions, activities outside the workplace and reduced sleep. So, be mindful and keep all OSHA regulations in mind when decorating the workplace for the holidays. What can your company do to ensure that your employees and your company enjoy a festive **and** safe holiday season?

## **Office Holiday Decorations**

When deciding how to decorate your office for the holiday season, it's important to remember to look for potential safety hazards. Holiday decorations should create higher morale at the workplace, not hazards and potential for accidents and injuries. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 12,000 people nationwide are treated for falls, cuts, shocks, and burns due to incidents involving faulty holiday lights, dried-out Christmas trees and other holiday decorations.

## **Fire Safety**

Before you start decorating your office for the holidays, you should verify that all fire safety equipment is in proper working order including fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and sprinkler systems. Do not place any decorative items on the sprinklers. Choose artificial greenery made of fire retardant materials. All decorations should be either noncombustible, inherently flame retardant (the label will say so), or have been treated with a flame retardant solution. Do not light candles. They contribute to 10,000 fires per year and are not safe to use in the workplace.

## **Electric Safety**

It's also important to make sure that you use holiday lights properly. Never place staples or nails through strings of lights, power cords, or extension cords. Do not connect more than three strands of lights together. Don't overload extension cords, which can cause the cord to overheat and start a fire. If extension cords are used they should not be laid across a walkway. If you decorate the outside of your office, verify that any lights are rated for exterior use. Make sure that all illuminated items are turned off when the office is closed. Designate one person to handle this task, so there's no confusion whether the lights need to be checked at the end of each workday.

## **Holiday Celebration**

If you'll be serving alcohol at your office holiday party, it's essential to make transportation arrangements for guests who should not drive. This is true whether the party is held at your place of business, a restaurant or any other location. Your company is obligated to keep coworkers and other guests protected from drinking and driving, and to mitigate potential legal liability to your business. Your company may consider designating members of management to watch for partygoers that should not be driving. Use a taxi service to drive employees and other guest home after a holiday party, regardless of their alcohol consumption.

Be creative in crafting a festive environment to celebrate the holidays. Be smart and be safe. For more safety information, please contact our Risk Management Department.



## When Disasters Strike Too Close To Home

When natural disasters (floods, fires, tornadoes or hurricanes) strike you or your business, the federal government will sometimes designate the affected areas as Federal Disaster Areas.

As an example, with the recent severe storms and flooding in Georgia, President Obama declared Bartow, Carroll, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Heard, Newton, Paulding, Rockdale, Stephens and Walker counties as Federal Disaster Areas qualifying for disaster relief assistance.

With this designation, the IRS is postponing until December 17, certain deadlines for taxpayers who live or have a business in the affected areas of Georgia. The deadline postponement is for return filing and other time-sensitive items such as tax payments that are due between September 18 and December 17.

If you receive a penalty notice from the IRS, call the phone number on the notice to have the penalty and interest abated. Only those penalties and interest will be abated for those who have a filing within the postponement period. IRS computer systems will identify those taxpayers or businesses located in a disaster area.

If you were affected by a natural disaster such as the recent floods in Georgia and live or have a business outside a designated disaster area, please call the IRS disaster hotline at 1-866-562-5227 in order to request tax relief.

In addition to the filing postponement, affected taxpayers who live in a presidentially declared disaster area also have the option of claiming disaster related losses on their federal income tax return for either this year or last year.

Please see IRS Publication 547, Casualties, Disasters and Thefts for more information.



# Payroll Corner

Four Point HR will be closed for the Thanksgiving Holidays on Thursday and Friday, November 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Please note the following instructions to ensure that your payroll is processed in a timely manner:

1. All payroll changes, including New Hires, Pay Rates, etc. should be turned in by Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>.
2. The Holiday Payroll schedule will be as follows:

Submit Payroll *	Check Date	Debit Date (If applicable)	Notes
Monday 11/23	Wednesday 11/25	Tuesday 11/24	
Monday 11/23	Friday 11/27	Wednesday 11/25	
Tuesday 11/24	Wednesday 11/25	Wednesday 11/25	Live checks only
Tuesday 11/24	Friday 11/27	Wednesday 11/25	
Wednesday 11/25	Friday 11/27	Friday 11/27	Live checks only
Wednesday 11/25	Monday 11/30	Friday 11/27	

**\*Please submit payroll no later than noon on the day it is to be processed\***

- Veterans Day is Wednesday, November 11, 2009. Four Point HR will be open for business, but the banks and post offices will be closed. If you have a Friday pay date and offer direct deposit, please make sure that you submit your payroll by noon on Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>. Any payrolls received after that time will receive live checks. If your pay date falls on Wednesday, please contact your Client Relationship Manager to work out your pay schedule for that week.
- The Social Security Administration announced that the 2010 Wage Base would remain at \$106,800.
- The IRS announced an increase to per diem rates for travel effective October 1, 2009:
  1. Travel to high-cost localities increased to \$258.00
  2. Travel to any other continental U.S. location increased to \$163.00