

It's Summertime, and the *Workin'* Isn't Always Easy

Addressing the challenges employers face in the warm summer months

Summer's greatest assets — namely, extended daylight hours and warm temperatures — have more to do with play than with work (think pool parties, barbecues and vacations). But work, of course, still has to be done in July and August.

“The casual summer attitude can easily creep into the workplace,” said Susannah Chance, human resources director for Leddy Group. “So, when the mercury rises, it's important to set specific expectations and communicate them to all staff members.”

Safety

Hot weather presents a number of dangers to employees who work outside and/or wear layers of protective clothing and gear, from heat rash to heat stroke, and even death. Supervisors and safety officers should be extra vigilant in the summer by monitoring temperatures, closely watching employees, granting extra breaks as needed and providing cool drinks to ensure proper hydration.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has a number of free fact sheets on the “Publications” page of its Web site (www.osha.gov) on topics like preventing skin cancer and avoiding West Nile Virus that can provide useful summertime safety tips.

“Your company's safety policies should be clearly expressed to all employees,” said Chance. “For instance, if employees are required to wear protective goggles, they should know to wear them *all* the time, even if the warm weather is making the goggles slip.”

Dress Code

Summer is equated with shorts, tees and flip-flops, and these casual, warm weather wardrobe staples might make their way into your workplace unless your dress code is established and enforced.

The more specific your dress code, the better. For example, if T-shirts are approved, specify whether they can have logos or sayings and if they can be sleeveless and/or have spaghetti straps; and, if shorts are approved, specify how short they can be, and if they are appropriate for every position within the company.

“Often, you'll hear employees say an item of clothing in question was from the career section at Macy's,” said Chance. “Make sure your company is dictating what qualifies as ‘professional’ instead of a department store.”

In addition, encourage employees to dress for varying temperatures. “Temperature often fluctuates in an office, and employees should dress appropriately at different degrees,” said Chance. “When it's cold, they should have layers handy, and when it's warm, even their first layer should be professional.”

Vacations

Summer is when most employees take time off. Your vacation policy should be specific about areas like the vacation request procedure, how much time an employee can take and the appropriate time and place for post-vacation chit chat.

“Even with proper planning, summer presents challenges,” said Chance. “When employees are out on vacation, any little thing — like someone calling in sick — can disrupt work flow. But you don’t have to get hot under the collar, excuse the pun, in that situation. Leddy Group has qualified people available for instant staffing fulfillment.”

For more information on how Leddy Group can help you fill your staffing needs, please visit www.leddygroup.com or call 866-LEDDY HR.