



October, 2011

## *Vital Business Solutions*

We are close to the holiday season. With daylight savings ending this weekend, we know it's time to get things in order for the year end. What do you have planned for this holiday season? Some of us will give bonuses to our team, a party or a small luncheon. Regardless of what you choose to do with your team this holiday season, please remember to follow some of the guidelines written below. **"Fun"** and **"Safety"** are the two words to remember while planning. Only 2 months left this year.....**Enjoy!**

### **2011 VETS 100**

Electronic submission of VETS-100/VETS-100A forms has been extended to November 1, 2011. This is due to technical problems that the USDOL has been experiencing bringing the system online. Contractors will have 60 days from November 1, 2011 to submit their report. During the delay, email and hard copy submissions of the reports may be used for the 2010 filing cycle. [Read more.](#)

### **WORKPLACE POSTERS**

Are you meeting posting requirements? Check the list of workplace posters to ensure you are displaying all posters applicable to your business.

[Federal workplace posters](#)

[District of Columbia workplace posters](#)

[Maryland workplace posters](#)

[Virginia workplace posters](#)

### **HOLIDAY POLICIES**

You should consider two (2) important questions when developing your holiday policies:

1. How do I accommodate employees' beliefs and avoid religious discrimination in the workplace?
2. How can I ensure safety at the company holiday gathering?

#### **Holiday Observance**

A diverse employee population with a variety of religious beliefs calls for a holiday policy that is fair and flexible. This can pose a challenge to employers. The trend in handling this issue is for employers to combine separate time classifications such as sick leave and vacation leave and term them as paid time off (PTO). PTO allows the employees flexibility to use time for the purpose they need, including observation of religious or other holidays. In addition, some employers provide floating holidays as a benefit. Employees can use floating holidays to observe holidays that are not officially observed by the business. Whatever the reason for the time off, employers should require advance request in order to plan coverage and avoid a lapse in output.

#### **Keeping Holiday Gatherings Safe**

Keeping your on-site or off-site holiday gatherings safe is equally important as keeping your workplace safe. The holidays are great to have fun and celebrate successes but

safety should be in the forefront from planning to the last goodbye at your event. Below are a few tips to keep your employees safe and reduce property damage during holiday celebrations:

- Think carefully about serving alcoholic beverages. If you do, consider making travel arrangements for guests who drink. This would address your employee's safety and comfort, as well as legal concerns.
- Consider fire safety when planning holiday decorations. Not only do holiday decorations cause fire; they can also be dangerous tripping hazards.
- Make sure holiday decorations do not cover your office or building sign and street address. All signage should be visible and paths clear to accommodate emergency vehicles, if needed.
- If giving your employees gifts, consider safety-conscious gifts and make sure other gifts are easy to operate and are safe. Gift certificates could be an option. Keep OSHA standard precautions in mind should an employee become ill from food poisoning or drinking too much alcohol or cut themselves.

In addition to safety concerns, employers should be sensitive to their employees' situations. It would be good not to add extra responsibilities around the holiday season by requiring formal attire or asking employees to donate to an event. It may be a good idea to conduct a brief survey to gain employees' input on holiday activities.

## WHO'S WATCHING YOU?

As a small business, you are required to adhere to certain federal, state, and local laws and regulations; especially those of you who are government contractors. Different government agencies can conduct audits to ensure you meet mandated compliances. This month, as a resource to help prepare you for one of those possible audits, we would like to share the IRS video, [Your Guide to an IRS Audit](#).

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*Is your  
Employee  
Handbook still  
relevant for  
2011?*

**We can help  
you  
with your  
Policies &  
Procedures  
Manuals!**

VBS can update your Employee Handbook and HR forms. An Employee Handbook identifies management's objectives, outline company rules and regulations, and identifies the company's expectations.

Let us know if you need the following documents:

- Employee Handbook
- Policies & Procedures Manual
- Human Resources Forms
- Job Descriptions

**Get everyone on the same page!**