



October 30, 2009

## Are You Prepared? Are you liable?

### Holidays

*Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, and more...*

Employees in most companies are from different backgrounds and cultures and have different religious beliefs. Do you have reasonable accommodations to handle the various religious beliefs and practices? How do you handle holiday celebrations in the workplace? How do you make reasonable accommodations without causing undue hardship on you, the employer? [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) states that "Employees cannot be forced to participate -- or not participate -- in a religious activity as a condition of employment." Read more on religious discrimination here: <http://www.eeoc.gov/types/religion.html>

### Flu Season

In our mid-year issue of the VBS newsletter, we discussed safety and health standards focusing on safety measures for an influenza pandemic. Now that the flu season has arrived, there is renewed concern on the negative impact that this might have on the workforce. How can you ensure your workplace is safe for your employees and that you can keep your business viable during the flu season? Here are a few guidelines you can follow to reduce the spread of flu:

- Promote regular hand washing
- Clean commonly-touched surfaces often
- Encourage sick employees to stay home
- If employees display flu-like symptoms at work, send them home immediately and recommend they get medical treatment
- Consider offering vaccine or encourage employees to get vaccinated against seasonal flu and H1N1 flu
- For employees who are at higher risk for flu complications, consider allowing them to work from home
- Consider canceling face-to-face meetings or space attendees further apart at meetings
- Try to make your leave policies flexible and include public health guidance

Employers are required to provide a "safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women" (OSHA Act of 1970). In addition, employers should also bear in mind that there may be occasions where the employee may not be sick but may need time off to take care of sick relative. Help ensure your employees understand your leave policies.

### **Additional Resources: Fact Sheets and Quick Cards**

[Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic](#), OSHA 3327-02N 2007

[How to Protect Yourself in the Workplace during a Pandemic](#)

[What Employers Can Do to Protect Workers from Pandemic Influenza](#)

[Respiratory Infection Control: Respirators Versus Surgical Masks](#)

Sources:

"[Federal Guidelines Encourage Employers to Plan Now for Upcoming Influenza Season](#)", U.S. Department of Homeland Security, August 2009

[Preparing for H1N1 Flu Season](#) U.S. Department of Labor

## **2010 Social Security Changes**

How does the 2010 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) impact the small business owner?

According to the Social Security Administration, cost-of-living adjustment will not automatically increase in 2010. How will this impact you? Do you have the facts? The link below will take you to the important facts and figures:

[Information About 2010 Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment](#)

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