

Preparing your business for Christmas party season

Many businesses will be busy planning their Christmas and end of year celebrations.

- Employers will need to ensure that they comply with the duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their workers when planning Christmas parties and other work-related social events.
- Under their health and safety obligations, employers should routinely assess the risk of sexual harassment before events and implement reasonable preventative measures.
- Reasonable steps may include reminding employees before the party about expected standards of behaviour and the business's zero-tolerance stance on sexual harassment.
- It is important to ensure that staff understand the business's Bullying, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment Policies. They should also understand that disciplinary procedures will continue to apply during the party and at any follow-on events attended by members of staff.

Croner's HR Documentation team can provide a Work-related Social Events Policy and our Croner Face2Face team can carry out on-site risk assessments.

Employers will need to do more, according to report

HR

The final report of the Keep Britain Working Review has been published. It sets out recommendations for the Government on ill-health and disability in the workplace. According to the report, employers lose, on average, £120 per day in profit from sickness absences; losses that are at a 15-year high. The report says employers will need to do more as "they are uniquely placed to act on prevention, to support rehabilitation, and to remove barriers for disabled people". Recommendations include developing a Healthy Working Lifecycle (as a certified standard across the UK), building better Workplace Health Provision and creating a Workplace Health Intelligence Unit to analyse data across the new system.

Did you know?

You can ask Croner [BrAlnbox 'What is the best way to manage high levels of sickness absence?'](#)

Young worker injured after machinery safety failures

H&S

An 18-year-old worker suffered a broken arm after becoming entangled in a manually operated lathe. They were using an emery cloth to deburr a metal component when the accident occurred. An investigation found that the employer had failed to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, had not established a safe system of work, and had allowed unsafe practices to become routine. The company was prosecuted for breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety etc Act 1974, which requires safe use of work equipment. They were fined £16,000 plus costs. The case reinforces the need for robust machinery, safety controls, proper training, and consistent supervision. Inadequate controls around rotating machinery can have severe consequences.

Did you know?

Croner offers a 24/7 H&S advice line, where our accredited H&S advisers can support with H&S concerns.

Contractual right needed to use PILON

HR

The Claimant raised a wrongful dismissal claim after being dismissed during their probationary period without notice, receiving PILON instead, even though there was no contractual clause. The tribunal ruled in the employer's favour as no loss was caused. However, the Employment Appeal Tribunal overruled this, finding that the employee was wrongfully dismissed. Additional claims for breach of contract regarding the timing of the dismissal and the length of notice period were unsuccessful, meaning that, although the employee was wrongfully dismissed, no compensation was due – the employee received the correct payment for their notice period. (*Betancourt v United Kingdom Research and Innovation*).

Did you know?

Croner's Legal Services department can represent your business in Employment Tribunal claims.

Key health and safety considerations for winter

H&S

As winter sets in, workplaces face different health and safety challenges. Slips, trips, and falls increase in risk due to snow, ice, frost, and rain. Regularly inspect and maintain external pathways – use grit or salt where necessary. Entrances should have absorbent flooring to prevent water puddles indoors. Winter temperatures can also affect workers' health and productivity. Ensure indoor workspaces are heated to 16°C. For outdoor spaces, provide warm rest breaks, protective clothing, and heated shelters. Thermal comfort is not only a physical issue but also a productivity factor. Feeling too cold can impair concentration and increase the risk of human error.

Did you know?

The cold winter months can also increase Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) among workers.

Please contact the 24 hour advice service for advice on your specific situation before acting on the information in this publication.