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CLIENT / ALERT

10 Ways Employers Can Stay Current with Changing Employment Laws

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Employment laws evolve constantly. From shifting wage and hour standards to new leave requirements and expanding workplace protections, the landscape is in perpetual motion. For employers, staying current is not only a matter of compliance; it's essential for maintaining a fair, well-functioning, and legally sound workplace.

Below are ten practical steps to help your organization stay informed, compliant, and ready to adapt as the legal landscape continues to change.

Review and Update Your Employee Handbook. A good place to start is with your employee handbook—the foundation of your workplace policies. It should reflect both your company's culture and current legal requirements. Schedule a review at least once a year, and make updates whenever major legislation or regulatory guidance changes.

If your organization operates in multiple jurisdictions, include state- or locality-specific addenda to ensure compliance everywhere your employees work.

10 Ways Employers Can Stay Current with Changing Employment Laws (con't)

Audit Wage and Hour Classifications. Once your handbook is in shape, turn your attention to pay practices. Misclassifying employees—whether as exempt or non-exempt, or as contractors instead of employees—remains one of the most common and costly compliance mistakes.

Regular wage and hour audits can help confirm that your classifications align with current Department of Labor standards and applicable state laws. Having legal counsel assist with this review adds an extra layer of protection and objectivity.

Revisit Employment Agreements. Just as your pay practices evolve, so should your employment agreements. Offer letters, non-compete clauses, confidentiality provisions, and severance agreements can quickly become outdated as laws change—especially regarding restrictive covenants and trade secret protections.

Take time to review and refresh these documents periodically, ensuring they are enforceable, up to date, and clearly define what constitutes confidential or proprietary information. This is especially important for remote and hybrid teams, where data security risks are heightened.

Subscribe to Reliable Legal Updates. Keeping up with every change in the law can feel daunting, but you don't have to do it alone. Subscribing to reputable employment law newsletters—whether from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), law firms, or government agencies—helps you stay informed without investing hours of research.

Taking a few minutes to review weekly or monthly updates can alert you to developments that may impact your workplace policies or procedures.

Provide Regular Training for Managers. Once you're informed, make sure your managers are, too. They are often your first line of defense when it comes to compliance. Providing regular training on harassment prevention, accommodations, leave management, and documentation practices ensures they understand both legal expectations and company policies. Trained managers are better equipped to handle sensitive workplace issues and help minimize potential liability.

In addition, consider working with an employment law firm to develop training tailored to your organization's needs. For example, a DC restaurant with tipped workers may require specialized harassment prevention training. Customized guidance ensures your team understands both federal and state requirements, feels confident in handling sensitive workplace situations, and helps your business stay compliant.

Establish a Relationship with Employment Counsel. Of course, even the best-trained teams benefit from professional guidance. Developing an ongoing relationship with employment counsel allows your organization to receive timely, proactive advice rather than waiting for issues to arise.

Counsel can help you interpret new laws, review internal policies, and anticipate changes that may impact your operations, helping you stay a step ahead.

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Use Compliance Checklists. Once you have expert guidance in place, tools like compliance checklists can help turn that advice into consistent practice. Whether you're onboarding a new employee, processing a leave request, or managing a termination, structured checklists ensure that no key steps are overlooked.

They're particularly useful for growing companies or lean HR teams that handle a wide range of responsibilities.

Track State and Local Developments. No compliance plan is complete without close attention to state and local laws. Many jurisdictions have adopted broader workplace protections and benefits than federal law requires. Monitoring state labor department websites or subscribing to local legal updates can help you catch these changes early and adjust your policies accordingly.

Keeping your handbook and training materials aligned with these updates shows employees that you value both legal compliance and fairness.

Leverage HR Technology. Technology can also make compliance easier. Many modern HR systems now include features that flag required form updates, alert you to posting obligations, or track employee acknowledgment of policies.

Using these tools reduces the burden on HR staff and helps ensure your organization remains current without relying entirely on manual tracking.

Offer Company-Wide Compliance Training. Finally, remember that compliance doesn't stop at the management level. Providing annual company-wide training on topics such as harassment prevention, confidentiality, cybersecurity, and ethics reinforces your organization's commitment to a respectful, compliant workplace.

These sessions promote accountability and strengthen workplace culture while also helping to mitigate risk.

Staying compliant in a fast-changing legal environment requires more than occasional updates. It demands consistency, awareness, and partnership. By reviewing policies regularly, keeping your team educated, and maintaining a proactive relationship with employment counsel, you can reduce legal exposure while fostering a stronger, more resilient workplace.

For further assistance or to schedule training, please contact OFP Shareholder Garen Dodge at 703-218-2129 or via email at garen.dodge@ofplaw.com.

This client alert serves as a guideline and does not constitute legal advice. For more specific legal counsel, please consult your attorney directly or contact Odin Feldman Pittleman at 703-218-2100.