



SAFETY2BUSINESS

TOP 6 CHRISTMAS DANGERS AT THE WORKPLACE



Looking to give your employees a Christmas gift that is not going to cost you a fortune and will certainly be appreciated? It is not always the material perks that people are going to remember you with. Care for the wellbeing and safety of your team is something invaluable which not only complements your figure head position at the company hierarchy but also shows your staff that they can trust you. The last by itself fosters a positive work culture where employees know they are appreciated and, most importantly, that they matter. We have put together a list of the top 6 Christmas health and safety dangers at the workplace. Keep reading...

1. COLD WORKPLACE- The minimum temperature at the workplace which HSE recommends is 16 degrees Celsius. Where work duties require more intensive physical efforts, this number goes down to 13 degrees. Note that this is not a legal requirement, however, you might want to read what more we have to say... So what happens when your employees are cold, especially if they sit in the office all day or spend long hours outdoors not moving? It won't be a lie to say that apart from shivering, their brains literally start to hibernate. Sadly, they are not bears and you would probably not like the idea of paying them for denning. Being cold usually leads to slower movements, lethargic reactions, passive decision making and little to non-existent productivity because it's harder to concentrate. As you can see, it is not just about your freezing workforce but also about your business process flow and the completion of work responsibilities within satisfactory time frames. You might want to re-think what costs more- your business utility bills or the inability of your workers to be as productive as they can be under normal circumstances. Unfortunately, the domino effect of the cold workplace does not stop here...

2. WINTER BUGS- Sometimes it is not just the chill factor that makes it harder to perform regular work duties. Having a weaker immune system (because you spend every day with your nose frozen) is a potential factor of catching one if not all of the three notorious winter bugs. Say hi to the colds, flues and the sniffles! Your workplace becomes an incubator of illnesses which brings extra complications such as lost working days, hardships in the distribution process because of lack of staff and many other unpleasant consequences all related to loss for your business.

3. DISTRACTED STAFF- Christmas decorations, cute jumpers, Secret Santa and Frank Sinatra's festive soundtrack playing throughout the building... When Christmas is just around the corner, sometimes it can be hard to keep the usual order and serious attitude in terms of carrying out the everyday work duties. There's nothing wrong about allowing your staff to enjoy the festive season even when they are at work and be the relaxed, 'good' type of boss who everyone loves. However, one thing you should never forget is that safety always comes first. It is your responsibility to make your staff aware of that and ensure they keep it as a top priority. Accidents don't take days off and usually happen when workers' attention is distracted. What better distraction than the joy of Christmas?



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4. CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS- We all love the sparkling Christmas tree lights- they make us genuinely feel the cosiness of the season and warm our hearts by bringing a change to our dull daily grinds. Unfortunately, danger is lurking behind every corner. But what dangers could Christmas decorations possibly hide?

Overload outlets is a number 1 hazard that is often (if not always) ignored or overlooked. Just because fire never happened in your workplace doesn't mean it won't. Always ask your employees to turn off Christmas lights before they leave. Actually, you should do the same at home when you are not there or while you sleep. Hazard number 2 is a classic holiday image and, in fact, it is not so far-fetched. Dangling your feet by the Christmas decorations brings various consequences and the aftermath hits the scale of severity dissimilarly. There is an easy solution to eliminate this risk and you should be lazy if you don't take it into account and act accordingly... As you decorate only the visible part of the Christmas tree and hide the empty, not so glamorous parts next to a wall, you should also try to tuck away any visible **(and out of sight)** cables and wires. Simple as ABC isn't it?

5. MENTAL HEALTH- Christmas might be your favourite holiday because it brings your whole family together and, if you are a workaholic, it is usually the only time of the year when you get to spend some quality time with them. It is not the same case with everyone though... What is a jolly, festive season for one is a trigger for grief and sadness for another. Holiday depression, family stress, feelings of aloneness and heartache... These are just some examples of difficulties which someone from your staff might go through. Apart from an employer, you should also be a human being and offer a pillar of strength, even if it is just in the form of emotional support. Being "there" for your workforce when they need you shows you are a caring boss and a good person. 'Tis the season to spread love and help others smile more!

6. DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT- Christmas is usually a pretty boozy time of the year and because the mulled wine is sweet this doesn't mean it's not alcohol. It is your responsibility to regularly check and make sure that your staff is not under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Not only can misuse lead to serious health problems but it can also create safety risks for the initiator as well as the others. If throwing a festive party you, as an employer, cannot simply close your eyes for inappropriate behaviour even if it is just for the "good cheer". There are boundaries which shouldn't be crossed under any circumstances. Failure to follow this rule might lead to you being vicariously liable for discrimination, sexual harassment, derogatory humour, etc. A good way to reduce the risk of this happening is having a written drugs and alcohol policy and a discrimination, harassment and victimisation policy. Additionally, you might want to consider issuing a statement regarding the Christmas period and work-related events. This way you will let your staff know what the health and safety dangers of Christmas at the workplace are and how to reduce the risk of potential accidents. Ignorance and lack of information are serious hazards themselves and the solution usually doesn't include any financial costs... So if it is you the one who have to educate your employees about the health and safety risks at the workplace then be it- it costs you nothing but it saves you a great deal of a trouble.