

## Workplace Risks

# The Dual Threat of Understaffing and New Employees

**W**ITH A RED-hot economy and many companies forced to operate with more new employees and/or limited staffing, mistakes are bound to happen – and that can be costly.

These mistakes can result in workplace accidents, lagging productivity leading to missed deadlines, or errors that result in returns or, in the worst-case scenario, lawsuits by angry clients.

If your business has taken on new employees or if you're understaffed, you have to get firm control of your operations and properly manage your risk.

### The risks of new employees

Workplace injuries can increase when you have new staff with less experience on the floor. In prior recoveries, when employers increased their workforce to meet the growing demand for their products and services, the number of workers' compensation claims tended to rise disproportionately.

New employees with less experience typically are more likely to sustain a workplace injury or injure other workers.

Double down on workplace safety if you have new staff, particularly if you operate a busy workplace.

Inexperienced employees can also make mistakes, which can cause problems with customers. If the mistakes are large enough, like a large print mailer that went out with the wrong phone number, you could be sued by your client.

Again, training is key to reducing the chance of mistakes. You should have safeguards in place, like supervisors double-checking products before they are delivered to clients.

Inexperienced employees are also more likely to contribute to incidents where third parties are hurt. Moreover, new hires may still be going through their training or may not be properly supervised when they work.

### The risk of being short-staffed

Because of the labor shortage, many employers have been forced to operate with fewer employees than they actually need, squeezing more work out of existing staff. But tired workers make mistakes.

### What's at stake

Working short-staffed can result in:

- Employees who are unproductive and stressed out.
- Lower production, service delays, or missed deadlines.
- Disgruntled workers, who may initiate legal action.
- Staff cutting corners, which can result in shoddy final products.
- Employees cutting corners and causing workplace accidents.

### The takeaway

You need to be especially vigilant to ensure that your existing staff are not overworked and that new workers are trained properly in their jobs, as well as in the dangers in your particular workplace.

If possible, pair up new workers with experienced ones who can show them the ropes and proper work techniques, and how to avoid workplace accidents. Safety training is also key and safe work practices need to be reinforced regularly. ❖



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