

BUREAU OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Q. I am a new employer, and I'm overwhelmed with all the different laws that suddenly apply to my company. But I've heard that the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) has a "Technical Assistance for Employers" number I can call for information. What kinds of "technicalities" do you specialize in?

A. Although we have received calls asking what goes into a first aid kit and whether it is legally required to offer "paper or plastic," our primary expertise is in helping employers understand their legal rights and responsibilities when it comes to their employees.

Q. So can you provide technical information about unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, state taxes and other payroll issues?

A. No, but we are happy to give you the numbers of the agencies that can help you with these issues.

Q. So what CAN you help me with?

A. We try to help employers understand their legal obligations in regards to hiring, firing, workplace harassment, accommodations for disabilities and religion, family medical leave, calculating minimum wage and overtime, deadlines for final paychecks, and many other employment-related issues.

Q. Can you give me legal advice?

No. We are not a replacement for your attorney and we cannot give legal advice. But what we can do is give you general information and point you in the right direction when it comes to making decisions about your employees.

Q. How exactly can you do that?

A. There are several ways that we can provide assistance for employers. You can call us at our general information number, which is 971-673-0824. We also have a website (see below) which has extensive information about the laws that employers must be aware of. In addition, we conduct public seminars throughout the state and contract with businesses to conduct on-site training; we sell handbooks on employment related topics and an "8-in-1 poster." In December we hold our annual Employment Law Conference. We even write a newspaper column on employment related issues that appears in several Oregon newspapers (you're reading one now) and some chamber newsletters.

Q. I appreciate the fact that you have a phone number and a free website. But since you are a government agency, why do you charge for your seminars and handbooks? Don't our tax dollars pay your salaries?

A. That's a very understandable question. The fact is that the Technical Assistance for Employers Unit does not receive any taxpayer money. That is why we must generate revenue through our seminars and handbook sales. These revenues allow us to provide our "employer hotline" service, information on the website, and weekly newspaper columns.

Q. But don't you work right next to the people that investigate discrimination and wage/hour cases against employers?

A. Yes, some of our best friends are BOLI investigators. But we guarantee confidentiality, and we will never reveal your identity to our colleagues in BOLI's enforcement divisions. When you contact Technical Assistance, that is what you will receive – and nothing more.

For more information on this and other important issues affecting Oregon employers, please visit our website at www.oregon.gov/boli/ta. You can also call us at 971-673-0824.